RESPONSIVE MENTOR, TRANSFORMATIVE MENTORSHIP

by

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STATEMENT OF DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

Low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented undergraduates often have tense relationships with institutions of higher education. They enter college after squeezing through an academic pipeline that has weeded out many of their peers. If they persist into higher education, students must learn to be comfortable in classrooms and academic spaces that do not, as a general rule, welcome their perspectives or their bodies. Instead, they are required to learn how to negotiate mainstream curricula and bureaucratic processes that deny their ways of knowing and cultural foundations. Mentors are often vital to this process.

Traditional concepts of mentoring do not recognize the deep and abiding tensions that underrepresented students might feel in the university. Neither do they encompass the problematic context of higher education itself, which can present a mine field of obstacles and threats to underrepresented students who confront the status quo with new ideas. Higher education is at odds with itself: academic discovery thrives on challenging received wisdom with new perspectives. Yet, the system rewards those students and researchers who are best assimilated into its norms and expectations. To do otherwise risks remaining on the margins of one's chosen academic discourse.

A mentor's tasks, as well as her relationship with the student, are deeply complicated by several factors, especially when mentorship occurs across differences of race, class, gender, sexuality and/or ability. Among the concerns that might trouble a

mentor's relationship with a protégé[1] are: the student's personal experiences of educational barriers and negative academic interactions; the exclusionary history of higher education that is alive in an institution's campus climate; the mentor's unexamined academic and social expectations regarding her field of inquiry and her own socialization into the field; and the mentor's assumptions about underrepresented or first-generation students and relationships with them. Negotiating this terrain can be extremely difficult for the mentor and risky for the protégé. In an effort to find a way through the tangles of mentor/ protégé relationships across difference, this work braids together history, sociology, and philosophy of education to reconceptualize mentorship through a Lévinasian theory of relations.

[1] In order to vary my language, I use student, scholar, and protégé interchangeably. I choose protégé rather than mentee; despite its connotations of the star student a mentor grooms to become a younger version of herself, I prefer it because of the word's meaning in French-- protected. It is my hope that mentors will protect underrepresented protégés from academic and social violence in the university and nurture the ideas they bring.

in loving memory

Marcella L. Hinsdale

1921 ~ 2007

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INTRODUCTION

> The University of Chicago is distinctive in many respects, but perhaps in none more so than our singular commitment to rigorous inquiry that demands multiple and often competing perspectives. The nature of questions being asked and the perspectives being engaged are often a function of the diversity of experiences and outlooks of those participating. Diversity for the University is therefore particularly germane to our core perspective. We must ensure that our scholarly community is composed of a rich mix of individuals who, through their own distinctive viewpoints, contribute to the intellectually challenging culture of the University.[1]

So begins the "Diversity Statement" offered by President Robert J. Zimmer on the University of Chicago's web page. He continues, detailing a history of academic inquiry that has depended upon the contributions of groups who were not always represented in other elite institutions. And he elaborates the mutual benefits of partnerships –particularly in health care and education projects-- between the university and its surrounding community. In closing, he writes:

> A commitment to diversity is central to our mission of discovery…. We have an obligation to see that the greatest variety of perspectives is brought to bear on the issues before us as scholars and citizens. We therefore celebrate our tradition of inclusion and recognize that our success as an institution depends on its ongoing renewal.[2]

These are admirable words, and the University of Chicago may well live up to them. But its ability to do so rests on other institutions providing a barrier-free path into the rarefied

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[1] Robert J. Zimmer, "Diversity Statement," The University of Chicago, http://www.uchicago.edu/diversity/zimmer.shtml (accessed 11/30, 2010).
[2] Ibid.

world of research and dynamic academic inquiry. The question then becomes: how do underrepresented students and their multiple perspectives enter the academy? Some are sustained by an innate drive and passion to pursue an education, and will persist in spite of obstacles; many more are mentored by professors who nurture their talents and support them over rough terrain. But do these mentors generally welcome the "competing perspectives" of the students with whom they work? If my recent conversation with a student is any indication, the answer to this question is no. She lamented that among her friends who are graduate students, many have had to abandon their scholarly passions to conduct research focused on future marketability, or their advisors' interests. Some have shifted from qualitative to quantitative practices in the process; the student straightforwardly related her disappointment with and resentment toward an academy that discourages the questions she wishes to ask and the methods she hopes to employ.[3]

My sustained daily contact with low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented undergraduates has made clear to me that their relationships with institutions of higher education are inherently tense. The tensions may not be visible at all times, but they drift just beneath the surface, ready to rise up when provoked by negative academic or social interactions. These students enter college after squeezing through an academic pipeline that has weeded out many of their peers; indeed, the nature of education for underrepresented groups has been called subtractive by some scholars.[4] If they persist into higher education, students must learn to be comfortable in classrooms and academic spaces that do not, as a general rule, welcome their perspectives or their

[3] All of my personal interactions with students and mentors are based on actual events. Details are omitted or changed to protect privacy.
[4] Angela Valenzuela and Inc NetLibrary, *Subtractive Schooling* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1999).

bodies. Instead, they are required to negotiate mainstream curricula and bureaucratic processes that deny their ways of knowing and cultural foundations. Traditional concepts of mentoring do not recognize the deep and abiding tensions that underrepresented students might feel in the university. Neither do they encompass the problematic context of higher education itself, which can present a mine field of obstacles and threats to underrepresented students who confront the status quo with new ideas. Higher education is at odds with itself: if President Zimmer is correct, academic discovery thrives on challenging received wisdom with new perspectives. Yet, the system rewards those students and researchers who are best assimilated into its norms and expectations. To do otherwise risks remaining on the margins of one's chosen academic discourse.

Ushering outsiders into the academy is a complex and at times daunting task. Despite decades of effort, the diversification of higher education has been slow, even if there have been some improvements. I argue that one reason for this slowness is a conception of mentoring that is not up to the task. Mentorship is vital all along the educational pipeline, but I am especially concerned with the undergraduate and graduate levels. Mentoring is often a practice that reproduces and maintains the exclusionary nature of the university, but some mentors perform a vital task for underrepresented students as they navigate higher education. They help students attain a certain degree of comfort in the academy while simultaneously maintaining their personal, scholarly, and cultural integrity. However, a mentor's tasks, as well as her relationship with the student, are deeply complicated by several factors, especially when mentorship occurs across differences. Among the myriad concerns that might trouble a mentor's relationship with a protégé are the student's personal experiences of educational barriers and negative

academic interactions; the exclusionary history of higher education that is alive in an institution's campus climate; the mentor's unexamined academic and social expectations regarding her field of inquiry and her own socialization into the field (how does one mentor differently from how she was mentored?); and the mentor's assumptions about underrepresented or first-generation students and relationships with them. Not every mentorship is troubled by these issues, but negotiating this terrain can be extremely difficult for the mentor and risky for the protégé. In an effort to find a way through the tangles of mentor/ protégé relationships across difference, this work braids together history, sociology, and philosophy of education in order to rethink mentorship.

The context of my endeavor is the McNair Scholars Program, one member in a family of programs designed to provide educational opportunities to groups that have historically been excluded from the university. All such initiatives aim to overcome years of exclusionary practices in higher education. Some faculty consider only the social and political dimensions of diversity efforts, thinking they are just a matter of skin color, or socioeconomic status. As President Zimmer would agree, however, far more significant is the academic dimension. Once included in our scholarly conversations, diverse students will help reinvigorate the academy, expanding the circles of our collective knowledge. To be truly free, academic inquiry depends upon intellectual plurality, and this in turn depends upon the inclusion of those who have been left outside the gates of the ivory tower. The McNair Scholars Program assists underrepresented students as they select and apply to graduate programs, and we prepare them for graduate study by providing faculty-mentored research opportunities. After overseeing seven summer research intensives, I have observed many protégé/ mentor pairs. From the beginning, some

professors stood out as superb mentors, and others left the first program director and me wondering why they did not understand what it meant to be a mentor. This endeavor grows from the questions we asked each other.

In an attempt to better understand both successful and unsuccessful mentorships, I have read widely on mentoring, but I have not found the answers to my questions in the mainstream mentoring literature. Mentoring is often left undefined, simply assumed to be helpful. On the other end of the spectrum, handbooks point the way toward "effective" mentoring and detail the behaviors and ethical rules a mentor should follow. Little attention is given to relational qualities of the mentor/ protégé bond, and how a mentor might cultivate these. Why do some McNair mentors seem to have an innate ability to develop relationships with their protégés? They may need to work across differences of race, class, sexuality, gender, ability—or any of their intersections. It is a common occurrence. Yet, these mentors develop relationships that allow them to teach what might be alienating knowledge and research protocols, while still encouraging the protégé to bring their embodied and culturally-grounded knowledge into the research process. Personally, I have experienced both strong connections and disconnections with students. According to the guidebooks for mentors, even in relationships that ended in disconnection, I had done what was needed to establish trust and encourage a good relationship. I had kept promises, been consistent and reliable, and confronted problems with honesty.[5] Pondering these disconnections, it seemed clear to me that some other forces were at play.

[5] W. Brad Johnson, *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007).

As difficult as any disconnecting experience might be, I can also point to relationships with students that have been equally surprising in their delightfulness and unexpected connection. Sometimes, McNair Scholars are astonishing in their openness to me and to the academic and emotional journey we take together. Yet as McNair director, I am but one thread among complexly interwoven services and people, and for a large part of a student's path, I must rely on a mentor's support and guidance. Recall the disappointed McNair Scholar above: her interactions with faculty who are not interested in her boundary-pushing ideas, and with peers who have had to adjust research projects to their disciplinary norms, have made her question whether she belongs in the university. I am confident she would agree that mentors who expect only to socialize their protégés into the existing norms of their discipline, who do not question their field's body of knowledge or research protocols, are not helping to broaden the academy. Mentoring outsiders calls for an open, responsive approach to students—one that welcomes not only their bodies and social experiences, but also the knowledge they bring and the questions they wish to research.

A number of McNair mentors have exhibited this responsiveness, and my goal is to better understand and articulate what is happening in these mentor/ protégé relationships. Over the course of my research, I realized that I needed to reconceptualize mentoring relationships-- to point toward a new vision I could not find in books or articles which reduced mentoring to a list of qualities, traits and behaviors, and where relational problems were usually ascribed to a deficiency in the student. As I considered what was missing from the literature, I felt a need to pose more basic philosophical questions about mentoring, to elaborate the seemingly spontaneous and serendipitous

connection between mentor and protégé. My questions are guided by my own disconnections with students, as well as my interactions with well-intentioned mentors who struggle to relate to protégés, and observations of more superficial, process-oriented mentors who do not often seem concerned with truly understanding the nuances of mentorship across difference.

> Sometimes [writes Nancy Grimm]…theory arises out of failed practice, when pressing problems challenge us to find new organizing principles and to make sense of what happened. But new theories arise out of failed practice only when we can silence old commonsense theories long enough to acknowledge tensions and to complicate our thinking.[6]

And so it is with this work. At its root, it arises out of failures to connect with students, and the need to complicate the mission and context of the McNair Scholars Program.

A mentor's good intentions are not enough to overcome the difficulties inherent in working across difference within the context of higher education. Modern academic structures, disciplines, and traditions are slow to change legacies of an intellectual past founded on exclusion and colonialism. Because of the institution's hierarchical nature, mentors and protégés who attempt to work together across difference are always already in a difficult position merely by virtue of their academic power differential. To complicate matters, academic conventions and research protocols generally negate the experiences and cultural situatedness of McNair Scholars, but first-generation and underrepresented students often wish to trouble the waters by adding their culturally-grounded voices and research to the academic conversation. Further, they fight an uphill battle against deep-rooted and inescapable deficit images, language, and discourses. And when the relationship is also troubled by differences in social and historical position,

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[6] Nancy Maloney Grimm, *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook-Heinemann, 1999), ix-x.

students will understandably enter the relationship with trepidation, feeling their vulnerability. Trust is hard to develop, and students may be fearful of approaching or being open to professors simply because they are from the more dominant group and hold academic authority. In these conditions, an important aspect of mentorship is helping a student learn to cope within an institution that denies her experience, and holds her at arm's length. But for the institution to transform, mentors must accomplish far more than this. Naming the history, experiences, and discourses students are simultaneously defined by and work against is, therefore, the first step in this project. I begin with studies that illuminate common academic experiences of first-generation and students of color, and move to the educational history of underrepresented groups. Personal memoirs, along with narratives of student and teacher experiences also play an important role: the intent is to reveal the still living legacy of an exclusionary history in my attempt to persuade mentors who may think race and class are no longer relevant to higher education.

To destabilize and remove authority from the academic hierarchy that traditionally positions mentor and protégé, I turn to the postmodern theories of relationality articulated by Gert Biesta and Alphonso Lingis. These spring from the work of Emmanuel Lévinas, in which the relationship with the other precedes any knowledge we can have of her. The other is a mystery who calls us to relationship, and that relationship is inherently ethical. A mentor must focus on the relationship with the protégé, and develop a sense of mutuality, before teaching disciplinary norms or research methods. Mainstream, traditional mentoring ethics offer only rules to follow: mentor and protégé are each well-defined, separate individuals, and the academy situates them in ways that limit their interactions. For these philosophers, however, the other is always a

mystery who calls us to respond, and our subjectivity is constituted in the event of responding. Mutuality replaces hierarchy, and our responses can disrupt the academic context that tries to pen mentor and protégé into a circumscribed space of relationship and action. I ask mentors to develop a set of skills that has not been the traditional province of mentorship:

> … the ability to simultaneously maintain multiple viewpoints, to make quick shifts in discourse orientation,…to work elbow to elbow with people differently positioned in the university hierarchy, to negotiate cultural and social difference, to handle the inevitable blurring of [relational] boundaries, and to regularly renegotiate issues of knowledge, power, and ownership.[7]

In such a relationship, culture, social positions, and history are not elided, nor are they given unchallenged power over individuals. But holding these in mind, mentors can enter what Gloria Anzaldúa refers to as the *Coatlicue*[8] state, an unstable, contradictory space; it is a space of possibility where mentors are challenged to rethink their practice.

Working with McNair Scholars has challenged me to do just this; and the mentors who "get it" seem to have an innate understanding of how to make such quick shifts in their relationships with protégés, whether these are social or academic. They learn to "realign their understandings"[9] about both their own subjectivity and the student's. This is an important move. However, the political nature of McNair mentorship calls me to go more deeply into the nature of responsiveness and subjectivity. Kelly Oliver's work on witnessing begins with Lévinas, but shifts toward the urgent ground of political action that moves beyond domination. Her philosophical stance is a fruitful way to conceptualize a mentorship that disrupts individualistic theories of subjectivity, while

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[7] Ibid., 2.
[8] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands = La Frontera*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999).
[9] Grimm, *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times,* 3.

recognizing that mentor and protégé are embedded in a messy context where history and culture are always part of the relationship's fabric. This speaks to a tension inherent in my project: the desire to make concrete for mentors the potential concerns of their protégés is at odds with my understanding of individual subjectivity borne out of responsive relationship. I ask that mentors inform themselves on the history and common experiences that hurt students. These are sociological realities-- the lived experiences of students of color and first-generation students in the university. Yet, I also ask mentors not to reduce students to less than their wholeness, seeing them as predictable exemplars of common patterns. They are mysteries to whom we must respond as individuals, and we do so, even as we better understand their uniquely situated selves through frameworks that include the history of their social groups.

The crux of the matter is this: there are problems with mentoring across difference, and they are embedded within a problematic context. But if the terrain can be crossed, there is a possibility that mentoring can ultimately remake the institution into the type of academy President Zimmer envisions. Responsive mentor/ protégé relationships will bring new perspectives into each academic discipline; over time, webs of responsive scholarly relationships will have the opportunity to affect the structures of the university itself. Higher numbers of underrepresented students might enter the professoriate, and will, in turn, become mentors. Some might enter the administration where they can effect policy changes. The context of my inquiry may be the McNair Scholars Program, and more broadly, opportunity programs in general. However, it is my hope that the idea of responsive mentorship will find a wider audience because the concerns I discuss affect mentors and protégés across higher education. If more mentors take a responsive

approach to their work across difference, then the tide might begin to turn toward an increasingly inclusive, intellectually open academy.

CHAPTER 1

MENTORING IN A CONTEXT OF ALIENATION

Every day they spend on a predominantly white, middle-class campus brings challenges for first-generation or working-class students, and students of color. These groups have all been underrepresented in their own ways, but they share a history of being actively excluded from the ivory tower. In the main, colleges and universities emphasize the Eurocentric knowledge and cultural values of the middle and upper classes; students from other groups must negotiate academic and social terrain that was created over the course of centuries during which they were excluded from the construction of new knowledge. Even today, after 40 years of opportunity programs, the landscape is not greatly changed. Consider the world students of color enter when they start college.

> The extent of diversity within higher education can be illustrated by examining minority representation at all levels of higher education, from students to presidents….If each level is viewed as a transition point, minority representation declines at each stage (except between faculty and administrator levels). In 2007, minorities accounted for 31 percent of undergraduate students, 24 percent of bachelor's degrees conferred, 20 percent of doctoral degrees, 17 percent of full-time faculty, 18 percent of full-time administrators, and 13 percent of presidents.[1]

If we confine the data to African American, Latina/o, and American Indian full-time faculty members, we find only 9.5 percent are members of these underrepresented

[1]American Council on Education, *Minorities in Higher Education: 24th Status Report*, eds. Jacqueline King and Diana Cordova (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 2010), 59.

groups, and they are 24 percent of the undergraduate population. At 4.4 percent of the total, foreign faculty outnumber Latina/o and American Indian faculty put together; they are only a shade behind the 5.4 percent share of African American faculty. By contrast, 77 percent of full-time faculty and 60 percent of undergraduates are white.[2] Recently, there has been a significant push to retain and graduate first-generation students. Aware that it is vital for us to educate as many youth as possible, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* focused its 2010 special report on "Diversity in Academe" on working-class students and economic diversity.[3] A sizeable number of these are first-generation students. A study by the National Center for Education Statistics revealed that

> [f]irst-generation status was significantly and negatively associated with lower bachelor's degree completion rates even after controlling for a wide range of interrelated factors, including students' demographic backgrounds, academic preparation, enrollment characteristics, postsecondary coursetaking and academic performance.[4]

A substantial overlap exists between first-generation students and students of color, but those working-class, first-generation students who identify themselves as white often feel uneasy in our institutions of higher education. It is little wonder: like ethnically underrepresented students, they seldom see themselves reflected in the professors who teach their classes, and the curriculum they learn often excludes their history.

The personal stories and social histories of these students are not the same, but all too often they are confronted on college campuses with similar forms of emotional, social, and political violence. Faculty and staff who grew up in more dominant social positions may not find this violence readily apparent; it can be hard for them to

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[2] Ibid.
[3] Paula M. Krebs, "Doctoral Diversity in Humanities Won't Be Achieved by Chance," The Chronicle of Higher Education, http://chronicle.com/article/Doctoral-Diversity-in-the/124443/ (accessed 10/31, 2010).
[4] U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005171 (accessed 12/21, 2010).

recognize, or they might minimize its impact. However, those of us who work with underrepresented students in opportunity programs routinely witness the academic and emotional stress placed upon them by the hurtful words and actions of the campus community, as well as by higher education systems that seem to have a never-ending ability to place barriers in their path. And we sometimes find ourselves unwitting participants in these events. As director of a McNair Scholars Program, I work one-on-one with underrepresented students; I also observe their relationships with faculty mentors. These individual relationships distill the larger forces at play in our students' experience of the academy, and I strive to bring a critical understanding to our notions of mentorship.

To illuminate the difficulties underrepresented students confront, I will offer the words of the students themselves. Many of the quotes to follow discuss racism or classism in the form of microaggressions. Chester Pierce and his colleagues have defined racial microaggressions as "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are 'put downs' of blacks by offenders. They further maintain that … the cumulative weight of their never-ending burden is the major ingredient in black-white interactions."[5] Subsequent scholars have expanded this definition to encompass the experience of all students of color, and the quotes used in this section will underscore that microaggressions are not merely a white/ black phenomenon. Situations such as those described in the following passage are a daily occurrence; dealing with them takes a severe emotional and physical toll on students, and has a deep effect on their academic progress. Microaggressions may be sorted into large thematic categories which are

[5]Daniel G. Solórzano, Miguel Ceja and Tara Yosso, "Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students," *Journal of Negro Education* 69, no. 1/2 (Winter/Spring 2000, 2001), 60.

consistent across each group served by McNair and other opportunity programs. The quotes below draw from studies of the collegiate experiences of Black, Latina/o, Native American students, as well as working class students who may belong to any (or multiple) racial or ethnic group(s). In a large and important study of the feeder schools to the University of Michigan's Law School, Allen and Solórzano interview underrepresented students who describe the day-to-day difficulties of trying to perform well in places that deny their very right to belong. Their research also provides the grist for a secondary study by Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso, focusing on the African American students in the parent study. To demonstrate the consistency of these experiences across groups, I also make use of Solórzano's in-depth study of Ford Foundation research fellows, Tierney's work with Native American students, as well as the memoirs of Alfred Lubrano and Ruben Navarette, Jr.

As a group, the works referenced are representative of a growing body of research into the college experience of students of color. We cannot be certain how many of them are also first-generation and/or working class, but often that is the case.[6] I will focus on quotes that pertain to the themes most pertinent to this work: the sense of being an outsider, and interactions with faculty and administrators. The pervasiveness and thematic consistency of microaggressions across groups and institutions points to the systemic nature of the problem they pose; hurtful words may be spoken by individuals, but they represent more than personal bigotry. They are a living, often unconscious, expression of the academy's exclusionary history. Such comments and actions taint an

[6] In the McNair program I direct, for example, over half of the students would fit either of the program's eligibility requirements: as a first-generation, low-income student, or as a member of an underrepresented in graduate education. Indeed, the first-generation, low-income eligibility has long been regarded as a proxy for a student's ethnicity.

underrepresented student's expectations and interactions in virtually every domain across campus and they are sustained by academic and social structures that alienate marginalized students. Further, it is important to remember that negative interactions with peers as well as in the community surrounding campus will also shape their college experiences. Their words testify to the truth of the burden imposed on students with the same demographic profile as McNair Scholars. As Allen and Solórzano note, Pierce "recognizes the tremendous amount of psychological energy expended on managing and negotiating microaggressions."[7] It is a weight no student should be made to carry. Listen to their voices.

The College Experiences of Students of Color

In his memoir, *A Darker Shade of Crimson,* Ruben Navarette, Jr. brings to life the experience of being one of the first Chicano students to attend Harvard.

> The literature from the admissions office that cluttered my rolltop desk back home spoke of tradition….Who were they kidding? Tradition? ... After all, even before I attended my first class at Harvard, I knew at least two things. I was an intellectually starved Mexican-American boy from a small, stifling farm town in central California. And as my once-trusted white friends in high school had been good enough to point out, my brown behind being at Harvard had absolutely nothing to do with tradition.[8]

With these words he paints a picture of the disorientation he felt as one of a "handful of African-Americans and other 'disadvantaged' minority groups [who] were invited to John Harvard's secret clubhouse":[9] an exclusive, Eurocentric society, markedly different from his own Mexican-American tradition. Having been an outstanding high school

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[7] Walter R. Allen and Daniel G. Solórzano, "Expert Reports on Behalf of Student Intervenors: Affirmative Action, Educational Equity and Campus Racial Climate: A Case Study of the University of Michigan Law School," *La Raza Law Journal* 12, no. 237 (Fall, 2001, 2001) (accessed 2/16/2006), 12.
[8] Jr Navarrette Ruben, *A Darker Shade of Crimson: Odyssey of a Harvard Chicano* (New York, N.Y.: Bantam Books, 1994), 49.
[9] Ibid.

student-- one of a handful of Chicanos who found his way through institutional barriers and into Advanced Placement classrooms-- he had applied to top colleges against the advice of most teachers and his principal. This experience is echoed by a Latina in Allen and Solórzano's study:

> I don't think White students understand that we have to deal with [feeling unqualified and unworthy]. No one ever told them you can't do it. Their counselors don't say, "Honey you can't go to college"…This one time, my counselor just told me that I should go home to raise children 'cause that's the thing I'm good for.[10]

Such comments must certainly undermine a student's sense of self-confidence when she finally reaches college; they become part of her personal history, and color her experience of the people she meets in the academy.

Underrepresented students also lament the fact that students, staff, and faculty from dominant groups lack any appreciation of the painful life experiences of some underrepresented students. One participant remarked: "They [White students] don't know what being a migrant [from a migrant farm worker family] is all about. They don't care." [11] Similarly, Tierney gives us insight into an Indian student's experience of coming to college:

> A lot of teachers might know a lot about business or accounting, but they don't know anything about Indians or what it's like to be away from home. One problem for students is they don't find people to help…. No one tells Indian students to go after their dream.
>
> I would like to take all of my instructors and lead them through my life. Show them what it's like to come off the reservation. They would see how Indian people hold onto each other real fast in order to hold the old ways together. They'd see how much trouble it is to make the decision to leave home and come to school, how Indian people love staying around and being on the reservation, at home. How it's really a struggle to come here. I

[10] Allen and Solórzano, *Expert Reports on Behalf of Student Intervenors: Affirmative Action, Educational Equity and Campus Racial Climate: A Case Study of the University of Michigan Law School*, 8.
[11] Ibid., 9-10.

> would love to have my instructors see that. Just to have them see the bonding that takes place. They'd see us right.[12]

The words above highlight how entangled certain concepts are for the students McNair serves. This young man begins by echoing the thoughts of the Latina quoted above, discussing a lack of encouragement for Indian students to "go after their dream." He quickly turns, however, toward the idea that college faculty do not understand "anything about Indians:" they need to come to the reservation to see and learn, to "see us right." In his experience, faculty are unaware of their cultural assumptions; they have no inkling of how little they know their students. How can a professor enter into a mentoring relationship across difference if she does not first question her assumptions and get to know her protégé? The flip side of this lack of awareness of others is a lack of personal awareness: the dominant group students and faculty at any given college generally do not understand the privilege inherent within their own social positions. As one Latino student commented: "I think just the fact that they're White. I don't think they know the fact that that is an advantage. I don't think they see it as an advantage."[13] Yet another student names the unconscious nature of much racism: "They [White people] don't even know they're racists. They never even think about a different perspective. They never had another perspective."[14] It is far easier for white students to enter the university system: it rewards their perspective, their language, and their putatively neutral inquiry protocols and writing practices. "Neutrality" here is in reality a white, Eurocentric culture and history that reflects the dominant students back to themselves. They do not need to

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[12] W. G. Tierney, "The College Experience of Native Americans: A Critical Analysis," in *Beyond Silenced Voices: Class, Voice, and Gender in United States Schools*, eds. Lois Weis and Michelle Fine (Ithaca: State University of New York Press, 1992), 311.
[13] Allen and Solórzano, *Expert Reports on Behalf of Student Intervenors: Affirmative Action, Educational Equity and Campus Racial Climate: A Case Study of the University of Michigan Law School*, 10.
[14] Ibid.

assume another identity to perform well in school, and according to the student quoted above, they do not realize their own academic racism. This is in stark contrast to students of color and working class students who must learn to understand and negotiate the dominant perspective and culture in order to thrive in college. They are left with a choice of assimilation or walking in two worlds[15]—a choice that dominant students may face, but only if they choose to put themselves in the position of the other. It is not forced upon them. On the other hand, underrepresented college students are thrust into a world where they must constantly cope with seeing themselves as others imagine them to be. W.E.B. DuBois writes, "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity."[16] The constant effort to "attain self-conscious [person]hood"[17] that merges the two selves takes a toll on underrepresented students as they struggle through higher education. If they do not assimilate, they expend a great deal of energy contesting the knowledge and history that alienates and denies them.

No Sense of Belonging: Not Our Space

> At Harvard, for the first time in our lives, my Chicano classmates and I were suddenly part of a racial and cultural minority. And naturally, we were as disoriented as Dorothy in Oz… All at once, the face of our immediate world had changed radically. It was a white face, with blue and green eyes; one that we did not recognize or trust. The experience was frightening.[18]

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[15] William G. Tierney, "An Anthropological Analysis of Student Participation in College," *The Journal of Higher Education* 63, no. 6 (Nov. - Dec., 1992), (accessed 2/1/2011).
[16] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, eds. David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 38.
[17] Ibid., 39.
[18] Navarrette, *A Darker Shade of Crimson: Odyssey of a Harvard Chicano*, 59.

Stories of alienation such as this are common in literature describing the experiences of underrepresented students. Navarette helps us viscerally understand his physical sense of deprivation upon entering Harvard: he hears no Spanish, the warm air turns chilly, and Mexican food is not easy to come by. He describes the disorientation and fear he felt even more deeply in the following passage:

> I felt illegitimate. My scrutiny of the abrupt changes in my surroundings heightened. I felt misplaced. I had been admitted to this old and pristine institution. I had accepted. I had arrived. Now all I need was some degree of proof that I belonged there, that the rewards of Harvard were rightfully mine to claim.[19]

The feeling of not belonging, of dislocation, is also beautifully articulated by several Ford Foundation Fellows, some in academic terms, others in emotional:

> You can feel out of place in so many ways. For instance, having equal access is not only sitting in the same classroom with Whites, hearing the same lectures as Whites, reading the same books as Whites, or performing the same experiments as Whites. This is not equal opportunity because the content of these varied experiences validates the experiences of White men and ignores or invalidates the experiences of women and men of color and to a lesser extent White women.[20]

> As an undergraduate, when I walked on campus there was this stigma attached to being a minority student. It's as if I had this "AA" pasted on my forehead for affirmative action student. Some people would say "oh, you're being too sensitive about race." But I would respond, "I know what I'm feeling and how I'm being treated." I can't ignore it. I don't have the luxury of ignoring or rationalizing other people's treatment of me and my feelings as being too sensitive…It's a constant battle, it has to be fought, and it continues to this day.[21]

As one new PhD poignantly remarked, "There is this sense of feeling out of place. Not fitting in. It is a coldness that made an indelible mark on my graduate experience."[22]

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[19] Ibid.,74
[20] Daniel G. Solórzano, "Critical Race Theory, Race and Gender Microaggressions, and the Experience of Chicana and Chicano Scholars," *Qualitative Studies in Education* 11, no. 1 (1998), 128.
[21] Ibid., 129.
[22] Ibid., p. 128

Undergraduates express strikingly similar thoughts: “I’m not really comfortable… being in the classrooms. I know that I’m different and I’m reminded of it every day.”[23] From assumptions that if they are on campus, they must occupy roles as cafeteria workers and waitresses, to assumptions that they are athletes rather than academic scholars, underrepresented students are given constant reminders that –at best-- they are viewed as “guests in someone else’s house.”[24] Students who are from marginalized racial/ ethnic groups, or who were raised in a working-class environment, often feel out of place in institutions of higher education. Dominant group faculty and students do little to remedy this situation; indeed, they may not even recognize its existence. Their inability to recognize the social and academic violence perpetrated upon working-class and underrepresented students is in many ways a refusal to do so; it is one element of what Barbara Applebaum calls the “epistemology of complicity.”[25] Dominant faculty exacerbate the situation when they label students who speak up as “too sensitive,” relegating painful interactions to the realm of individual rather than systemic action. When underrepresented students are made uncomfortable by dominant group students’ hurtful remarks in the classroom, faculty who do not or cannot --or refuse to-- respond by honestly naming the dynamics at work perpetuate the cold campus climate. They contribute to making an “indelible mark” on underrepresented students’ college experiences.

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[23] Allen and Solórzano, *Expert Reports on Behalf of Student Intervenors: Affirmative Action, Educational Equity and Campus Racial Climate: A Case Study of the University of Michigan Law School*, 15.
[24] Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner, "Guests in Someone Else's House: Students of Color," *Review of Higher Education* 17, no. 4 (1994).
[25] Barbara Applebaum and MyiLibrary, *Being White, Being Good* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010), 221.

Faculty and Administrators

"You know, you know… they just act like you don't belong here."[26]

Interactions with faculty and administrators contribute greatly to students' feeling that they are not truly part of the campus community. These interactions may not even be direct conversations. Take, for example, this young African American male's complaint:

> I was [in the department building] and I was walking down the hallway… [and] one of the teachers' doors was open. …She's like, 'Oh, I should have locked the door. My purse is in there.' I was just [thinking to myself], wow, …maybe [she] should have kept that to [herself] or something, ok, oh. I reminded you that you should lock your door."[27]

Another African American student elaborates a disheartening academic interaction:

> …I was doing really well in the class, like math is one of my strong suits….We took a first quiz…and I got like a 95…he [the professor] was like, "Come into my office. We need to talk," and I was like, "Okay." I just really knew I was gonna be [told], "great job," but he [said], "We think you've cheated… We just don't know, so we think we're gonna make you [take the exam] again." …And [then] I took it with just the GSI [graduate student instructor] in the room, and just myself, and I got a 98 on the exam.[28]

These stories are not extreme, isolated incidents. The literature is replete with experiences where a staff member's racist attitudes and actions result in a stinging microaggression. Further, students are frequently made to feel that they are not academically capable, and they rarely see themselves reflected in the curriculum. As one student commented, "The coursework is very straightforward. If there's any references to people of color as a whole, it's very marginal…. I've never felt that people of color are necessarily

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[26] Joe R. Feagin, Hernan Vera and Nikitah Imani, *The Agony of Education: Black Students at White Colleges and Universities* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 1996), 96.
[27] Solórzano, Ceja and Yosso, *Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students*, 68.
[28] Ibid., 66.

incorporated into the material that we actually cover."[29] In recent years, some institutions have responded to such grievances by expanding their curricula to ensure every student meets a minimum diversity requirement; classes range from sociological ethnic studies courses to the literature of long-ignored groups. My own institution offers faculty development workshops to incorporate diversity issues into existing classes. Although such efforts gesture toward answering this student's complaint, the resulting classes are often relegated to an "add-on" status, and are not seen as part of the core curriculum.

Working class students who are white experience similar difficulties within the academy. Alfred Lubrano tells the story of a young woman's experience studying Jane Austen in a literature class at the University of California at Davis:

> "God," Cheryl said aloud in class, "If I read another description of a ball gown I'm gonna go crazy." Everyone was shocked. The professor looked at Cheryl and said, "Are you, by any chance, from working-class parents?"…Cheryl hadn't seen that one coming. "It was a revelation," she recalls. "I remember saying to myself, 'Oh, so that's what this is.' To me, all that gown stuff was unimportant. But to the upper-class students, Jane was a goddess and all this made sense to them…. It made me think about all the students who had been given bad grades and rejected by teachers because they had a different way of looking at the world, having come from the working class. And literature is such a middle-class thing to do. You almost have to have come from money to pursue and understand it. So I got out of it and joined the Army."[30]

Just as students of color run into obstacles constructed by the whiteness of academia, so the working-class students must deal with the fact that college life is lived in a middle or upper-class space with middle-class rules and values. People from the working class must change themselves—or, at least, important parts of themselves—to fit. It is another form of assimilation; Lubrano writes: "working class people, steeped in their own culture and

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[29] Allen and Solórzano, *Expert Reports on Behalf of Student Intervenors: Affirmative Action, Educational Equity and Campus Racial Climate: A Case Study of the University of Michigan Law School*, 15.
[30] Alfred Lubrano, *Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2004), 248.

standards, must leave that identity behind and live in a middle-class world. We must be saved from our state of original sin, says writer Valerie Miner."[31] Interactions such as the Jane Austen incident create a chilly climate for working class students, just as certainly as the Eurocentric curriculum and racially-oriented microaggressions do for the students of color.

Campus climate is a key concept to understanding underrepresented students' experiences in higher education. It can be defined as the interaction among the following factors: the historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of various groups, the institution's structural diversity (numerical representation of minority groups), psychological climate, and the behavioral dimension, which is characterized by relations among the groups on campus.[32] An even more compelling description of campus climate is offered in Turner's citation of Fryer and Lovas:

> "…the ambient, affective character of a place—the conditions that evoke feelings, either positive or negative, from the people in the organization. Climate is to the affective aspect of human beings in an organization what air is to the physical aspect. Climate is an organization's emotional atmosphere. People breathe it."[33]

Racist or classist acts or words, coupled with the ongoing anxiety inherent in attending a predominantly white, middle-class institution, can create an uncomfortable climate that will push students of color and working class students away if they do not feel they are supported. It is important to clarify that by "racist" I do not merely mean those isolated and glaring actions and words that are easily classified by the term. Feagin's definition is helpful; he explains that racism is "the socially organized set of practices that deny

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[31] Ibid., 82.
[32] Sylvia Hurtado and others, *Enacting Diverse Learning Environments: Improving the Climate for Racial/ Ethnic Diversity in Higher Education*, Vol. 26 (8) (Washington, DC: George Washington University, 1999), 5-6.
[33] Turner, *Guests in Someone Else's House: Students of Color*, 356.

African Americans [and other targets of discrimination] the dignity, opportunities, spaces, time, positions and rewards this nation offers to white [dominant group] Americans."[34] He also takes care to point out that targeted groups suffer physical, psychological, and social harm because they must use so much energy and time to develop strategies to cope with the effects of racist practices. These effects are well documented. [35] Dominant group faculty and students who deny the harm done to others through this constant, sometimes subtle, undermining are complicit with it.

Interactions such as those I have described, compounded by a curriculum that generally ignores their histories, can only create a stressful environment for the underrepresented and first-generation students served by the McNair Scholars Program. Any attempt to mentor students takes place within, and is already affected by, the exclusionary curriculum and stressful interactions that may occur with other students, faculty and staff. Comments and actions that result in microaggressions against McNair Scholars are buttressed by, and in many ways result from, a long history of exclusion from higher education. To use Turner's metaphor, too often students feel that they do not belong in the academic "house." It is a house built with others in mind: those from middle and upper class, western European backgrounds whose arts and sciences form the cornerstone of the curriculum, whose social and political practices form the hierarchical administrative and academic structures, and whose expectations and attitudes frame the perception that those underrepresented students who seek to enter their "home" are

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[34] Feagin, Vera and Imani, *The Agony of Education: Black Students at White Colleges and Universities*, 7.
[35] See, for example Grace Carroll, "A Challenge of Getting a "Good Education": Black Students on White Campuses," in *Environmental Stress and African Americans: The Other Side of the Moon*, First ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998); Sylvia Hurtado, "The Campus Racial Climate: Contexts of Conflict," *The Journal of Higher Education* 63, no. 5 (1992); Janet K. Swim, "African American College Students' Experiences with Everyday Racism: Characteristics of and Responses to These Incidents," *The Journal of Black Psychology* 29, no. 1 (2003).

interlopers. I would like to examine a bit more fully the construction of this house. Today's academy is built upon a foundation that allowed students such as McNair Scholars to be only laborers or provide services to those for whom the house was made, a stark legacy on display in the many comments just quoted.

Of Messy Roles and Contested Spaces: Walls We May not See

Before turning to a brief overview of this history of exclusion, I must truthfully acknowledge, too, that the academy is a place where I have very likely been the beneficiary of historically embedded exclusionary practices, as both a student and an administrator. The undergraduates with whom I work have not always been accepted into the spaces where I walk with relative ease; my belonging and ability are not constantly challenged as are theirs. I have come to know this not only through reading and study, but more importantly, through the graciousness of students who recognize in me someone who wishes to effect change. They have shared their lives with me, and because of their openness, I can understand on a more visceral level the truth of the words I read in books and articles, and from which I drew examples for the previous section. However, significant differences across race, class, gender, ability, and sexuality often lie between us: I am positioned as a white middle-class woman whose father earned a four-year college degree, and I am the recipient of a certain degree of privilege due to my skin color and social advantages. School was easy for me, and college classes reflected my social and cultural history back to me; I did not experience uncomfortable and damaging effects from the mainstream curriculum. Now, I hold a position of authority because I direct the McNair Scholars Program, and I am perceived to be well-integrated into the administrative hierarchy that has long dominated the institution of higher education, an

academic system that has historically excluded the students I serve while it accepts and privileges those of my background. This history creates a multi-layered power imbalance between my students and me that can make my work with them problematic.

Many would like to believe that racism, homophobism, classism, ableism and other "isms" are a thing of the past, and that events such as I have described in the previous section are isolated incidents of hatred and prejudice that can be overcome by good will. However, a long history of exclusionary practices in higher education institutions founded upon these "isms" has become embedded in the structures of our educational system, as it is in institutions across society.[36] The response of some to the cold fact of racism is that we should become "color blind." This is not a helpful approach to either institutional or personal racism, and in fact reinforces the status quo. "Color blindness" leads to an insidious form of silencing: whites do not acknowledge the lived experience of students of color, instead labeling them "too sensitive" because they are "imagining" an event they know truly happened. Color blindness and race neutrality, as dominant ideologies, act "as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in American society."[37] It is a mask-- a new disguise for exclusion--arising from centuries of racist and classist practices that created the stratified system we have inherited.

Sketching in some historical background is critical to our understanding of the current situation in higher education and the microaggressions underrepresented students endure. Younger white, middle-class Americans may not remember these days, but they

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[36] Joe R. Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 311.

[37] Octavio Villalpando, "Practical Considerations of Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Theory for Latino College Students," *New Directions for Student Services* 105 (2004), (accessed 2/16/2006), 44.

reverberate through the years in families of students of color and in working class families. To enter an American university usually means to choose a world that closed its doors to your parents and grandparents-- and worse-- may have attempted to eradicate their language and culture. It means you enter a world that until rather recently saw your ancestors as "less than"—savage, uncivilized, dirty, dull—a population, at best, to "help" and guide like children, to bring into the fold of American [dominant white] civilization, generally by learning a trade. Family elders may have related their traumatizing educational experiences to a younger generation of underrepresented students. Feagin, for example, discusses the role institutional racism plays when Latino and African American parents help their children select colleges.[38] A history of racist educational experiences engenders a well-founded skepticism – or even mistrust—of programs designed to assist students of color. [I have experienced students whose parents have asked them to find out how much participating in McNair would cost them. Or perhaps the potential applicants themselves think there is a hidden agenda, that we ask something beyond their applying to and entering graduate school.] Moreover, ingrained racist and classist beliefs and practices have found safe haven in educational systems, especially the long-used, and ever-present tracking. These practices reinforce dominant group students' sense of superiority, even if for some it is very subtle: they internalize certain attitudes, rarely questioning their privilege or a system that excludes large numbers of their peers. They believe their hard work and greater intellect have brought them only what they deserve. However, an underrepresented student without access to AP classes, higher level math, or one who is tracked into lower level math due to his or her color or ethnicity is often not

[38] Feagin, Vera and Imani, *The Agony of Education: Black Students at White Colleges and Universities*.

given access to higher education;[39] the playing field is far from level. Those underrepresented students who do make it into higher education have entered a "secret clubhouse" to which they do not feel they truly belong, and in which they feel constantly threatened by those who proprietarily believe they do.

A very similar history of exclusion is experienced by working class students who enter the academy. Although it is not true of the entire group of working class students, large numbers of them are the first in their families to attend college, so academic systems and mores can be difficult to navigate. Alfred Lubrano beautifully expresses this feeling with a stunning image from his life:

> While I was in class at Columbia, struggling with the esoteric du jour, [my dad] was on a bricklayer's scaffold not far up the street, working on a campus building….My dad has built lots of places in New York City he can't get into: colleges, condos, office towers. He made his living on the outside. Once the walls were up, a place took on a different feel for him, as though he wasn't welcome anymore.[40]

Lubrano uses the term "Straddler" for working-class people who enter the world of middle and upper class America. When the route to the middle class is accessed through a university education, he notes, following Robert Nozick, that working class students often feel like "immigrants to the realm of thought."[41] Exemplifying the complicated intersections of race, class, and gender, Lubrano looks to bell hooks as an example of the pain college can cause working-class students because they do not feel they belong any more than students of color might. Perhaps their skin color allows white working-class students to more easily cover their differences with silence, but the wounds remain.

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[39] Tara J. Yosso, *Critical Race Counterstories Along the ChicanaChicano Educational Pipeline* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 208.
[40] Lubrano, *Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams*, 7.
[41] Ibid., 87.

> …bell hooks explains that she was "invalidated" by college because the new world forced its own reality on her, squeezing out what she previously knew. She believed she was an object of ridicule by student elites—even by the bourgeois blacks, who knew about as much about her working-class world as bourgeois whites did. [Straddlers feel] like intruders invading citadels of "the white supremacists…."[42]

Every day, first-generation, working-class, and students of color still experience the effects of a past that many dominant group students and faculty would like to believe is behind us. The history that has physically excluded them from college classrooms continues to rear its head in the form of academic and social microaggressions, as well as a curriculum that marginalizes them. Dominant faculty from more privileged social positions must attempt to understand the obstacles that present special challenges to first-generation and students of color in higher education: obstacles shaped by history, obstacles that color students' academic experiences as well as their perceptions of potential mentors. Their more powerful position in the academy implicates mentors in its history of social and academic violence, even though they may attempt to work against it. Being cognizant of this fact as they work with students is key.

Remember, too, that middle-class European American faculty are shaped by the academy's history, although the position they have occupied is a privileged one of acceptance and belonging. Their perceptions of students of color and working class students were formed within institutions from which these groups were largely excluded. For many college faculty, this has led to a certain obliviousness that easily slides into arrogance. It plays out in scenes such as the professor who questioned a student's mathematical ability. Microaggressions like this are the fruit of an exclusionary history. The academy consists of Eurocentric-normed academic and social spaces, a domain

[42] Ibid.

faculty consider they have a right to inhabit. On the other hand, underrepresented students are "guests" who need to learn the house rules to be welcome and succeed. Their talents always remain suspect, and, as we have seen, their ability to succeed at the dominant curriculum is often questioned. What is far worse, of course, is the extreme to which these views are sometimes taken: "guests" who speak up and ask for recognition can quickly become "intruders" who violate the white spaces of the university. The recent racial tensions across the University of California campuses attest to this fact. A noose appearing in a campus library during Black History Month certainly reveals a strong undercurrent of racial strife, whether or not it is acknowledged on a daily basis.[43] However, such racially motivated acts of campus violence comprise but another wave in the long history of exclusion. Faculty from dominant groups who teach underrepresented students can learn to appreciate their well-founded concerns, and to become more aware of the microaggressions and miscommunications that often occur between them and other members of the college community. These are more subtle than outright acts of violence, but they are the fuel that stokes the flaring up of fires.

The force of microaggressions is better understood if we contextualize it by briefly considering some of the history of higher education. They are the new face of an exclusionary history: a constant stream of messages sent to first-generation and students of color: you do not belong here; you will be considered less intelligent if you speak English with an accent; I do not care to honor your feelings of discomfort; if you want to succeed, you must learn to assimilate into the (dominant) "mainstream" of academic culture; you may no longer be legally segregated from us, but we will continue to find

[43] Larry Gordon, "Noose Ignites More Protests at UC San Diego," *Los Angeles Times*, February 27, 2010, http://articles.latimes.com/2010/feb/27/local/la-me-uc-protests27-2010feb27 (accessed 2/2/2011).

ways to exclude you. Messages such as this reopen wounds inflicted by the history of exclusion from higher education, as well as the larger social histories of subordination and segregation. History has prepared our roles. With ease, we slip into them: faculty and staff, unconsciously insensitive and ignorant of the other; students, so quickly wounded and labeled “too sensitive.” On each side, our roles are complicated by a sense that dominant group faculty and staff “own” academic spaces, just as whites felt they “owned” the suburbs that were “invaded” by other ethnicities. Such a proprietary view is emblematic of the arrogance of power. Academic struggles are high brow turf wars, and the stakes are significant: how is a truly pluralistic and intellectually vigorous system of higher education to come into being without the representation of those who have been excluded? With each microaggression, historic roles are played out symbolically again and again. Faculty and staff constantly reenact the dominant role; they often benefit from and collude with systems that maintain the racist and classist status quo. Even with good intentions, and a conscientious effort to resist the roles and discourses they inhabit, they can become the agents of exclusion. Although this is partly a function of their more powerful position within the academy, and they may strive to be neither racist nor classist, history can entangle faculty. When dominant faculty recognize that they represent and benefit from the exclusionary and subjugating forces of the past, they might begin to understand it is little wonder students are so wounded by seemingly small, daily interactions that carry this past into the present.

The Weight of History

Wright and Tierney document the earliest beginnings of racism in American higher education; their work helps us comprehend how the arc of history culminates in the stressful climate of contemporary campuses.

> Within a decade of the first European settlement in America, plans for an Indian college were already underway. The earliest colonial efforts to provide Indians with higher education were designed to Christianize and "civilize" the Indians, thus saving them from the folly of their "heathenish" and "savage" ways.[44]

The authors detail efforts that reach back to the early 1600s, when both Harvard College and the College of William and Mary expressly included educating and "civilizing" Indians as an integral part of their missions. Dartmouth College had a similar charter. Only a handful of Indians attended these schools, however. Those who did received a Eurocentric education of the time, one based on Latin and Greek; a number of these students are documented to have died early deaths, succumbing to European diseases to which they had no immunity. Even in these early years, we can see the assimilationist nature of higher education: then as now, students of color had to learn to negotiate unfamiliar emotional and cognitive terrain in order to be successful in the academy. To varying degrees, this meant, and still means, risking alienation from their home communities-- while their presence simultaneously benefits the university.

As the colonial period gave way, and Manifest Destiny became the justification for the westward movement of whites, relations with Indians took a grim turn. Adams writes:

> After the Civil War, the coming of the railroad, the telegraph, and network of military forts further constricted the Indian's freedom of movement.

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[44] Bobby Wright and William G. Tierney, "American Indians in Higher Education: A History of Cultural Conflict," *Change* 23, no. 2 (Mar./ Apr. 1991), (accessed 2/14/2010), 12.

> Homesteaders, cattlemen, and sheepmen were close behind. Conflict was inevitable, and it came regularly in the form of thirty years of intermittent but bloody warfare. And then, as one tribe after another was crushed on the battlefield, after the great bison herds were all but exterminated, it was suddenly over. A new phase of Indian policy was slowly emerging – the reservation system. In 1871, Congress officially confirmed the altered status of Indians: they were now deemed to be wards of the government, a colonized people.[45]

But agreeing to live within the boundaries of the reservation system did not save the Indians' ways of life. By 1881, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs concluded that "Indians were confronted with 'this stern alternative: extermination or civilization.'"[46] "Philanthropists" and bureaucrats accepted the idea of the day that "'Savage and civilized life cannot live and prosper on the same ground. One of the two must die.'"[47] This is clearly not a civilized and philanthropic response to otherness, and assumes there is only one (Eurocentric) civilization worth preserving and cultivating. In order to effect their acculturation and assimilation, and to avoid Indians' extinction, schools were the weapon of choice. The Board of Indian Commissioners asked,

> "If the common school is the glory and boast of our American civilization, why not extend its blessings to the 50,000 benighted children of the red men of our country, that they may share its benefits and speedily emerge from the ignorance of centuries?"[48]

White policy-makers supported the idea of schooling as a means to assimilation, but the road was not straightforward. Their first attempts with day schools and boarding schools on the reservation were continually confronted with, and their efforts thwarted by, the pull of tribal life and family ties. Richard Henry Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian School, was one of the first proponents of the off-reservation boarding school,

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[45] David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 7.
[46] Ibid., 15.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 18.

because he believed that, for the Indian child, we must "Kill the Indian in him and save the man."[49] Lomawaima cites Utley in explaining the origin of Pratt's educational philosophy of assimilation: his Civil War experience with Negro soldiers.

> In Pratt's mind the Negro furnished the example. Slavery transplanted him from his native habitat and tribal affiliation into a new cultural environment, where he had to adapt to a new language, new dress, and new customs. As a result, in a span of several generations he had been shorn of his primitivism and elevated to American citizenship. Pratt believed profoundly that as the Negro had been civilized, so could the Indian be civilized.[50]

Pratt first experimented with Indian education in Florida, offering a militaristic and vocational training for displaced adult Indians—men who were, in fact, prisoners removed from closer association with their Plains tribes. When he later turned to founding a school for Indian children, Pratt placed it in an eastern city in order that students could be immersed in a "civilized" environment. He strongly believed that students must, at a certain point in their curriculum, become integrated into the surrounding community so that they would understand the benefits of "civilization." He did not seek to colonize Indians, but to individualize them.[51] They were to become self-reliant in the way American mythology admires: to become farmers and tradesmen who could take part in mainstream American life.[52] In order to accomplish this feat, he searched the Dakota Territories, convincing chiefs to allow him to take Sioux children far away to his new school. Adams writes, "…the strong-willed Pratt was relentless, hammering away over and over again at the idea that the Indians' only defense against

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[49] Ibid., 52.
[50] K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Inc NetLibrary, *They Called it Prairie Light* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 4.
[51] Adams, *Education for Extinction : American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, 53.
[52] Ibid.

the white man was to learn his language and his ways."[53]

Pratt's Carlisle Indian School gained renown and favor with authorities; it served as an exemplar upon which was built an educational system that amounted to a form of cultural genocide. In these schools, children entered an entirely foreign environment, even the sense of space was disorienting.

> Adjusting to a new physical environment also meant adjusting to new conceptions of space and architecture. The boarding school, the new recruits quickly learned, was a world of lines, corners, and squares….Whites, Indians surmised, largely conceived of space in linear terms. This was no mean observation, especially for students who came from cultures where definitions of space and the meanings assigned to it were radically different. For Lakota students, for instance, the essential touchstones of cultural reality—the sky, the sun, the moon, the tepee, the sundance lodge, and the 'sacred hoop'—were all circular phenomena. Thus, an old Lakota, Black Elk would tell John Neihardt in 1931: 'You will notice that everything the Indian does is in a circle. Everything that they do is the power from the sacred hoop.' But now, Black Elk would lament, his people were living in houses. 'It is a square. The sacred hoop is vanishing among the people…We are vanishing in this box.' Although the circle held less symbolic significance in other cultures than it did for the Sioux, the larger point should not be missed: conceptions of space are not neutral.[54]

In this world of lines and corners, the children lived a military-like existence stripped of the significance of their home spaces and the sacred hoop. Their long hair was cut short; their clothing replaced with uniforms for the boys and nearly identical dresses for the girls; the food was unfamiliar and many times insufficient; and further, many schools were distressingly punitive in nature. Severe physical punishments were meted out for simple rule infractions, as well as for not speaking English. The ban on speaking one's native language must have been particularly hard to bear, and learning English was no simple matter. Linguistically, Indian languages are strikingly dissimilar to western languages; further, because language and culture are so deeply intertwined, English

[53] Ibid., 48.
[54] Ibid., 113.

proved an extremely difficult language to learn. Consider this example, which Adams cites from the work of anthropologists Cluckhohn and Leighton, who studied the Navajo people.

> Take the example of a commonplace physical event: rain. Whites can and do report their perception of this event in a variety of ways: 'It has started to rain,' 'It is raining,' 'It has stopped raining.' The People can, of course, convey these same ideas—but they cannot convey them without finer specifications. To give a few instances of the sorts of discrimination the Navaho must make before he reports his experience: he uses one verb form if he himself is aware of the actual inception of the rainstorm, another if he has reason to believe that rain has been falling for some time in his locality before the occurrence struck his attention. One form must be employed if rain is general round about within the range of vision; another if, though it is raining round about, the storm is plainly on the move….The People take the consistent noticing and reporting of such differences (which are usually irrelevant from the white point of view) as much for granted as the rising of the sun.[55]

Language, so inextricably tied to culture, was a means of enforcing the assimilation of Indian students.

When it came to math, the curriculum focused on numbers, measurements, and attention was also given to farming-oriented word problems.

> For the discerning student, there was a larger lesson as well: the culture that was engulfing him placed a high priority on measuring things; space, time, goods, and money were divided and subdivided to the nearest fraction. The white man's culture was a culture of calculations.[56]

This lesson had to be learned well if Indian students were to assimilate as citizen-farmers. Understanding whites' relationship with numbers was vital to learning how to interact with them. Indeed, measuring Indian land had allowed for its appropriation. With regard to history,

> [s]pecial attention also was given to instilling a heartfelt, patriotic identification with the nation engulfing them. In this connection the subject

[55] Ibid., 139-140.
[56] Ibid., 143.

> of United States history was central. But how could Indian pupils be made to identify with the 'American experience' wherein Indian-white conflict and the settlement of the West were central themes in the national mythology?[57]

The answer was a text that gave very little information about Indians, apart from a few pages discussing the colonial period.

> Adams eloquently sums up this period in our country's educational history:
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> > In the final analysis, the boarding school story constitutes yet another deplorable episode in the long and tragic history of Indian-white relations. For tribal elders who had witnessed the catastrophic developments of the nineteenth century—the bloody warfare, the near-extinction of the bison, the scourge of disease and starvation, the shrinking of the tribal land base, the indignities of reservation life, the invasion of missionaries and white settlers—there seemed to be no end to the cruelties perpetrated by whites. And after all this, the schools. After all this, the white man had concluded that the only way to save Indians was to destroy them, that the last great Indian war should be waged against children. They were coming for the children.[58]

Indian education changed over time, and more contemporary accounts of boarding school experiences are not uniformly negative, but low expectations remained; whites neglected these young people, minimizing the importance of their education, and continuing to emphasize vocational training if there were much schooling at all. The impact of these years is still startling: "As late as 1932, only 385 Indians were enrolled in college and only 52 college graduates could be identified."[59] Not until the second half of the twentieth century did Indian education receive more attention from the federal government. When Tierney and Wright published their article, the educational attainment of Indian students was still of great concern: "…If 100 Indian students enter the 9th grade, only 60 will graduate from high school. Of these graduates, a mere 20 will enter

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[57] Ibid., 146.
[58] Ibid., 336-337.
[59] Wright and Tierney, *American Indians in Higher Education: A History of Cultural Conflict*, 17.

academe, and only about three of these will receive a four-year degree."[60] Although the history of Indian education is quite grim, and some might argue that it is an extreme example, it is well to recall that the other groups served by opportunity programs have been similarly excluded from mainstream educational institutions. The bureaucratic mechanisms may have been different, but they have their own stories of exclusion, histories in which language and culture are denied, in which they are tracked into vocational rather than academic programs, and assimilation remains the outcome to be encouraged.

Turning to the history of African American students in higher education, the group from which Pratt took his inspiration, the legacies of the past remain with us just as clearly as they do for Indian students. After a history of slavery and mistreatment, blacks' emancipation did not translate into educational freedom and opportunity. Most educational institutions in the North were segregated by law well into the nineteenth century, and a significant number persisted in localized pockets even until the 1940s. This was not merely a Southern custom. In higher education, even private universities in the north excluded or strictly limited the number of black students; some placed discriminatory restrictions on blacks who were allowed to attend.[61] Blacks did not begin to attend predominantly white institutions in significant numbers until the 1960s.

Problematically, whites were generally in control of the segregated schools black students attended: from elementary to college level, this was the case. Feagin offers Carter Woodson's indictment of white dominated education for African American students:

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[60] Ibid., 18.
[61] Feagin, Vera and Imani, *The Agony of Education: Black Students at White Colleges and Universities*.

> The thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and in almost every book he studies…. Much of what [universities] have taught as economics, history, literature, religion, and philosophy is propaganda….When a Negro had finished his education in our schools, then, he has been equipped to begin the life of an Americanized or Europeanized white man…. The education of the Negroes, then, the most important thing in the uplift of Negroes, is almost entirely in the hands of those who have enslaved them….[62]

Although these words were written in the 1930s, the truth of them remains. With the exception of certain academic sanctuaries such as ethnic studies departments (which are often marginalized within their institutions[63]), African American and other students of color are still "taught to be 'Europeanized whites' culturally, but without the privileges of that status."[64] As Feagin succinctly states:

> Traditionally white colleges and universities are white-normed spaces that are more than demographically white; they are white in their basic cultural components. African American students entering such campuses often find that they are expected to accept positions as racial subordinates and to accept one-way cultural assimilation as a legitimate goal.[65]

As we saw with Indian students, once again assimilation-- the "Americanization" of an underrepresented group-- becomes the goal of education.

Perhaps less known is another story of segregation, one that ran parallel to the more familiar story of white/ black relations: in education, as in other aspects of life, Mexicans were subject to the same treatment at the hands of the dominant white political elite. Wollenberg traces this history; although he focuses on California, similar histories can be found across the Southwest.

> In 1855 the California legislature provided that the State School Fund be apportioned to counties on the basis of a census of *white* children ages 4 to 18. The implications of the white-only census were clearly understood [by

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[62] Ibid., 111.
[63] Turner, *Guests in Someone Else's House: Students of Color.*
[64] Feagin, Vera and Imani, *The Agony of Education: Black Students at White Colleges and Universities*, 11.
[65] Ibid., 28.

> the State Superintendent who said] that 'had it been intended by the framers that the children of the inferior races be educated side by side with whites, it is manifest the census would have included children of all colors.[66]

California's mix of "inferior races" with whom "the great mass of our citizens will not associate in terms of equality"[67] included Indians, Blacks, and Asians, who were excluded along with the Mexican children. However, it is that latter who were present in the largest numbers. Separate schools could be established for any of these groups "providing the [white] citizens do not object."[68] The Superintendent's ideas became law in 1860. As early as 1890, the courts ruled that black students could attend mixed schools, but Mexican students were segregated long into the twentieth century.

In the 1920s, nearly 10 percent of the state's population of school children were of Mexican descent. Educators practiced a program reminiscent of the Indian schools: "Americanization," teaching in English, banning Spanish language, and promoting "American values… and work habits."[69] The students were not seen as fit for book work, but more suited to action and vocational training. One so-called educator even remarked that they "grow listless under purely mental effort."[70] Separate schools and classes were called for, so that the Mexican children did not inhibit the progress of white children. Segregation of Mexican children in the California schools was "well-entrenched," although exceptions did exist.[71]

> Even in segregated districts, it was common to allow a few Mexican children to attend 'white' schools. Usually they were children of middle-class Mexican-American parents, or descendants of old "Californio" families. In San Bernardino the criteria for choosing exceptions to the rule

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[66] Charles Wollenberg, "Menendez v. Westminster: Race, Nationality, and Segregation in California Schools," *California Historical Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (Winter, 1974, 1974), 317-318.
[67] Ibid., 318.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 320.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid., 321.

> of segregation were "apparent prosperity, cleanliness, the aggressiveness of the parents, and the quota of Mexicans already in the mixed school."[72]

Even as segregationist practices were questioned during the 1930s and 1940s at an administrative level, and legal segregation was struck down in the courts, the attitudes students might confront in their teachers would stifle any child's desire to learn. After attending a seminar on the problems experienced by Mexican Americans, one graduate education student of the day is quoted as saying, "I've had a very entertaining experience… but as far as I'm concerned they are still dirty, stupid, and dumb."[73] Such vignettes illustrate that whites were learning their own roles in the play of power: the schools and universities that segregated the Mexican students were also places where white students' attitudes and expectations toward people of Mexican descent were formed and reified. The roots of today's institutional racism are easy to trace back through the previous generations' dominant group staff and faculty. And so the educational troubles persist. Similar to the statistics cited above for Indian students, Solórzano, Villalpando, and Oseguera inform us that out of 100 Chicana/o elementary students, only 52 will graduate high school, and of these only 31 enroll in college (20 at community college; 11 at four-year institutions). Only 10 of these 31 will graduate with a BA.[74]

Enter McNair

I have highlighted but a portion of the contentious history of underrepresented students in American education. Similarly, the history of the McNair Scholars Program is

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[72] Ibid., 322.
[73] Ibid., 323.
[74] Daniel G. Solórzano, Octavio Villalpando and Leticia Oseguera, "Educational Inequities and Latina/o Undergraduate Students in the United States: A Critical Race Analysis of their Educational Progress " *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 4, no. 3 (July 2005).

important to note, because it is an outgrowth of the continued move toward educational integration and "uplift," toward completing students' "Americanization" by finally bringing them into the academic hierarchy itself. McNair lies embedded within the messy spaces of contemporary higher education, but it uses a particular language and set of concepts that grow out of the 1960s. As Navarette eloquently writes:

> …I was [at Harvard] because of unspeakable tragedy. I was there because in the cool evening air of Memphis in April, James Earl Ray had aimed a rifle at a hotel balcony and killed Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Cities burned, people were killed, advocates called for inclusion, and after the ashes cleared, a handful of African Americans and other "disadvantaged" minority groups were invited to John Harvard's secret clubhouse, as if to say that whether or not the systematic exclusion of our parents was justified, it was at least no longer prudent. …So they opened the door, albeit half-heartedly and halfway.[75]

This is the milieu in which we can place the blossoming of educational opportunity programs. Although the first programs preceded Dr. King's death by a few years, it is within this context of a halfway open door, and within this history of exclusion and derision, that we place them.

The McNair Scholars Program is a federally-funded graduate school preparation program. It is an effort to increase the number of low income, first-generation and underrepresented students who enter graduate education, with the ultimate intent that they earn doctoral degrees and diversify the professoriate. McNair is one of the U.S. Department of Education's "TRIO" grants which now encompass seven programs, including the better-known Upward Bound and Student Support Services; as a group, they are a product of President Johnson's War on Poverty in the 1960s. Their birth in the Civil Rights Era places TRIO programs in a social context of racial struggle, and within a

[75] Navarrette, *A Darker Shade of Crimson: Odyssey of a Harvard Chicano*, 49.

time when deficit language regarding poverty and urbanness[76] was widely circulating. Although it was the last TRIO program to become authorized in 1989, the understanding and expectations of this mid-1960's culture are found in all McNair programs nationwide.

A textual analysis of the McNair legislation and regulations will help us unravel the interwoven discourses that inform the program's mission and services. They can ensnare our well-intentioned efforts to work across difference-- entangling students, mentors, and staff as we attempt to renew the academy by extending its reach to include those were not part of its foundations. The regulations that govern the program are published by of the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE). First, we note that the text of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 (amended 1998) authorizing the federal TRIO programs refers to "the 'Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program' that shall be designed to provide disadvantaged college students with effective preparation for doctoral study."[77] Here, in an elaboration of the term "disadvantaged," Foucault's concept of population is clearly at work. According to Foucault, the ability to define a certain portion of a populace demographically and statistically restored purpose to the government itself: it became the means by which the population was cared for and controlled. "The welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc."[78] become the purpose of government. The means used to attain the population's welfare "are themselves all in some sense immanent to the

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[76] Oscar Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty," in *The Study of Slum Culture- Backgrounds for La Vida* (New York, N.Y.: Random House, 1968).
[77] *Higher Education Act of 1965, 1998 Higher Education Act Amendments, Subpart 2, Chapter 1: Federal TRIO Programs,* Public Law Sec. 402 A. 20 U.S.C., (1998): 1070a, 5.
[78] Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect*, eds. G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 100.

population; it is the population itself on which government will act."[79] That is, the means of governmental action are an outgrowth of the definition itself of any given population. Once a population exists as a concept, it can be "measured, organized, statistically developed into categories, and dealt with in institutions [including educational], each with its own techniques of power/knowledge."[80] Thus, the McNair Program defines a segment of the population whose welfare and control will be dealt with within our educational institutions. The population of McNair Scholars is both constituted by and controlled by power.

The regulations refer to our "target population" of eligible students; they detail who is to be included in the program, as well as who must be excluded. Eligible students are the very same groups whose difficult histories were outlined above, and who often carry with them the burden of a history of educational microagressions. Among other requirements, a student may be eligible if s/he is "(1) a low-income individual who is a first-generation college student; [or] (2) a member of a group that is underrepresented in graduate education."[81] The regulations take pains to minutely describe who qualifies as first-generation, low-income, and which groups are underrepresented in graduate education. "The following ethnic and racial groups are currently underrepresented in graduate education: Black (non-Hispanic), Hispanic, and American Indian/ Alaskan Native."[82] As an interesting indication that the discourses of power are dynamic and living, the list of underrepresented groups has been expanded by a policy decision of the

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[79] Ibid.
[80] Thomas Popkewitz and Marie Brennan, "Restructuring of Social and Political Theory in Education: Foucault and a Social Epistemology of School Practices," in *Foucault's Challenge: Discourse, Knowledge , and Power in Education* (New York, N.Y.: Teacher's College Press, 1998), 21.
[81] *Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program*, Public Law 34 CFR, Part 647, 324.
[82] Ibid., 325.

U.S. Department of Education to include Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander. The services McNair programs are allowed to offer are detailed in the regulations as well. These include:

> (a) opportunities for research or other scholarly activities at the grantee institution…(b) summer internships, (c) seminars and other educational activities, (d) tutoring, (e) academic counseling, (f) assistance to participants in securing admission to and financial assistance for enrolling in graduate programs, (g) mentoring programs… (h) exposure to cultural events and academic programs not usually available to project participants.[83]

Analyzing the official language of the McNair Scholars Program offers insights into the discourses of power that gave rise to the TRIO programs in 1965, and are still circulating today. I would like to offer a short genealogy of these discourses in an attempt to reveal the series of concepts embedded within McNair's regulatory framework. Foucault defines a genealogy as a "form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges [or] discourses…."[84] By constructing a genealogy, we will be able to see not only the discourses at play in the McNair program, but we will also be able to understand them as an effect of power. If we can name the discourses surrounding McNair, we also begin to apprehend what is being hidden by power.

First and foremost, we must acknowledge TRIO's sociohistorical setting in the Civil Rights Era, a time when the long history of racialized inequalities and injustices was being confronted. As previously noted, the TRIO programs are an outgrowth of Johnson's War on Poverty. At the time, poverty was considered chiefly an urban problem: the prevailing discourse located poverty in the inner city of large metropolitan areas, places where mostly ethnic minorities lived. The discourses of the 1960s echo to

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[83] Ibid., 324.
[84] Michel Foucault, *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New: Pantheon Books, 1980), 117.

this day, and these ideas will be tightly woven with what I will call the discourse of disadvantage that is at work in the McNair program. We see the emphasis in the grant language on "disadvantaged" students who are "low income, first-generation" and "underrepresented." The language calls into being an eligible population that can now be managed – and what is more, a population that can be "helped." As Zygmunt Bauman might interpret the situation, the "self-enlightened elite"[85] with the political power to envision and implement the McNair Program thereby call into being a particular population of students who become objects of "rule and *care.*"[86] We, the powerful elite, reach "down" through the hierarchy to name a group we "rule" by asking them to complete certain activities and requirements and to "care" for—shepherding them toward "higher" outcomes and an ostensibly brighter future. Our government, through the Department of Education, exercises power by taking action on behalf of their welfare. (Ironically, this is just what we did historically, removing Indian youth from their homes, taking them to boarding schools.) The terms that describe McNair Scholars conjure images of the unseen "advantaged, higher income, majority" student: a hypothetical white, middle-class student whose parents went to college. The binary is implicit in the participant definitions written into the regulations. It is against this hidden and normalized student that the McNair participant population is constructed. We imagine a certain normalized student, and this allows us to project discourses of power onto the bodies of our students, our "target population." The McNair Scholar herself, as well as the knowledge of who can become a McNair Scholar, are thus created within the dominant discourses of urban poverty: cultural deprivation, family deficits, and ethnic

[85] Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993), 24.
[86] Ibid., emphasis added.

status are all embedded within the larger discourse of disadvantage. Each of these discourses is racialized. Indeed, many who first hear a description of the McNair program conflate the two forms of eligibility, and think that it only serves ethnically underrepresented students. Dominant-group faculty and staff assume the grant's descriptors of disadvantage reveal all that they need to know about this population of students; their wholeness is reduced to a handful of terms, because the terms are packed with layers of hidden meaning.

The regulations also detail the types of services McNair programs can offer, and nowhere is the discourse of disadvantage more obvious than in "(h) exposure to cultural events and academic programs not usually available to project participants."[87] This service is based on the idea students do not have access to cultural events. Importantly, embedded with this assumption is an inherent definition of culture that is based upon the higher socioeconomic status [white middle and upper class] of those whose relation to power allows them to articulate the discourses that define the McNair population. Only a certain type of "culture" is worthwhile for our purposes; it is clearly not the culture our students are from—the discursively defined deficient low income, ethnic, urban culture. Other discursive binaries are operationalized by services such as tutoring and academic counseling. In these, we understand that the disadvantaged student is also academically "at-risk": already –or in danger of-- performing below the standards of our unseen advantaged student. The discourse that produces disadvantaged McNair scholars assumes they will require extra academic help, either because of personal deficiencies, or perhaps also because their families cannot help. Cultural, social and familial deficits are once more called into play by the discourse of disadvantage. Just as my students are called into

[87] Office of Postsecondary Education, *Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program*, 324.

being by the discourses of the program and the institution, so am I. Together with faculty mentors, I become an instrument of the government's caring, of the institution's striving to promote the "welfare" of the groups eligible for the McNair program. The scholars and I are all constituted by the institution, our relationships within it, and the discourses that surround and hold us. By naming the processes through which we are constituted, it is my hope that we might begin to question and remake the institution itself, and the discourses it perpetuates. I contest the assimilationist aspects of the McNair Scholars Program; indeed, they work against the university's stated goal of rigorous inquiry sustained by a plurality of perspectives.

Putting the Pieces Together: Mentoring in a Context of Alienation

This is the context in which my work is set: one that constructs my students in opposition to power and historical norms, a context that diminishes their backgrounds, their families, their histories, and asks them to assimilate to dominant academic and social norms. The two major services of the McNair Scholars Program to which this study is dedicated are the intertwined "summer internships" and "mentoring programs." In McNair, a student's intensive summer research project (internship) is guided by a faculty mentor. It is a perhaps the most important activity of the McNair Scholars Program: the opportunity for students to conduct research in which they are passionately interested under the direction of a faculty mentor is crucial to both their graduate admissions success and their understanding of the nature of graduate education. These relationships have borne fruit on many levels. The student has a new sense of herself as a researcher and academic; she believes herself capable of the work. The mentor feels pride in the student, and is able to assist her in gaining an understanding of the research process

that the student may use to earn admission to the most appropriate graduate program, often a very prestigious one. These faculty members play a vital role in the success of our students, and therefore the program. The mentor/ protégé relationship has a profound impact upon the students' academic self-confidence and the path they will ultimately follow. I hope that the McNair coordinator and I could also be considered mentors; a number of students have told us as much.

But to complicate matters, many of the faculty who mentor McNair Scholars through research projects occupy more dominant social positions in relation to the students, very similar to my own position described earlier. Of course they hold more powerful positions in the academic hierarchy than do their students, as well. The roles of McNair mentors and staff are deeply affected by our social and academic histories and the discourses that surround and permeate our work. Not only is it a challenge for us to remedy our lack of understanding-- what makes us blind to seeing students "right"—we must always be mindful that our students' perceptions of our interactions with them are similarly embedded in this history, and for them it may be a very hurtful one. Mentoring takes on a new urgency when viewed in this light; it can have a deep effect on a student's experience of the campus climate as well as their belief that they can move on to graduate school and meet with success.

The Westminster College McNair Scholars Program draws students from three very different institutions: Salt Lake Community College (SLCC), the University of Utah, and Westminster College itself. As an open-access community college, institutions such as SLCC have traditionally been more accepting of the groups served by the McNair program. However, the University of Utah and Westminster College each have their own

histories of exclusion; they are certainly part of the broad sweep of this chapter. Their entry requirements have, from the beginning, limited the pool of students from which McNair might attract participants. Even so, students from these schools will perhaps enter the McNair mentoring relationship with more trepidation because they have experienced social and academic microaggressions similar to those described earlier in this chapter. For example, a significant number of McNair Scholars have told me that in high school they were discouraged from applying to college. Further, Westminster College is one of a handful of small, private, liberal education institutions in the intermountain West; as such, it is reputed to be a more "elite" school. Historically, it has indeed served mostly white, middle class students: the type of student for whom the institution and its curriculum were designed. First-generation and underrepresented students have often seen it as too expensive and too exclusive. This is changing in recent years, with many more first-generation and underrepresented students choosing to attend. However, McNair Scholars from the University of Utah may feel a change in climate from one campus to the other, and this may have an effect upon their experience in the McNair program. Students, staff, and faculty-- we each bring our own personal histories to the mentoring relationship. It may take the form of obliviousness to our privilege and an unconscious proprietary feeling that the academy is our home, or a painful familial and personal history of exclusion and microaggresssions that colors our attitudes and expectations.

Although I write about the McNair Scholars Program, the lessons I hope to learn through this study are applicable to a broad range of opportunity programs, and especially to those that include any attempt to mentor students across difference. We endeavor to

mentor McNair Scholars across difference within a messy, multidimensional context that is embedded in the history of American higher education, and deeply entwined with the continuing racism of microaggressions and a cold campus climate. Tensions lie between the historical and sociological realities of the groups McNair serves and a Foucauldian understanding of the discourses of deficit and disadvantage that exert an undeniable influence on a mentor's work. But in grasping and negotiating these tensions, we might open a space that holds the possibility of transformation—where we can disrupt the discourses of power, and offer an alternative vision of McNair Scholars and the academy itself.

Considering that a great deal of mentoring literature ignores this context, it is little wonder there is sometimes mistrust and poor communication between mentor and protégé. Understandably, in such a messy, contentious milieu, relationships between even two well-intentioned people may become troubled. To better understand what will enhance mentoring in opportunity programs, it is first helpful to consider what the traditional mentoring literature offers to this discussion.

CHAPTER 2

THE RISKS OF TRADITIONAL MENTORING IN A TROUBLED CONTEXT

As described in the previous chapter, a history of exclusion, microaggressions, and deficit discourses complicate mentoring relationships across difference; it is clearly difficult to find a path through the tangled context in which mentors usher outsiders into the academy. Traditional rule-oriented models of mentoring rest on assumptions of individualism and a meritocratic academic hierarchy; they lack historical context and an understanding of the discourses of power and belonging that can trouble any teaching relationship across difference. Because it is borne from, and woven into the fabric of, a time-honored academic approach to training and guiding protégés, traditional mentoring is capable of neither disrupting dominant academic norms nor overcoming structures that limit relational possibilities. It makes no attempt to reinvigorate the academy, to encourage pluralism of ideas and experiences. Rather, it aims to draw students into – and to reproduce-- the academy as it is. With such a raison d'être, traditional mentoring makes it difficult for underrepresented students to feel they belong in the academy. This is not to say that nothing good can come of more conventional mentorships, but rather, that ethical rules and common sense behaviors are not always enough to move the relationship over rough terrain. Traditional mentoring tends to foreground the problematic aspects of working across difference, and the result can be tense relations

with students or students who feel unsure of themselves within an academic setting. In order to clarify its limits, I will examine traditional mentorship, paying close attention to its individualistic and hierarchical foundation, for this is where many of my concerns originate.

A Closer Look at Traditional Concepts of Mentoring

The mentoring literature is broad and deep; it has been extensively studied in the fields of education, psychology, business, and nursing. There are models of feminist co-mentoring,[1] peer to peer mentoring, and team or networking mentoring,[2] but for my purposes, I will examine a more "classic" one-on-one teaching situation because a traditional mentoring model is what is most often meant by the word, and it is the type of mentoring McNair Scholars receive during the summer research intensive. If there is one thought that can be found across mentoring research, and especially with regard to higher education, it is that there is no widely agreed upon definition of mentoring.[3] Jacobi[4] offers over a page of definitions taken from education, management, and psychology, and her work is still cited often. Johnson[5] notes that the term is used over a range of relationship forms and contexts, and may be used interchangeably with advising, supervising, or informal friendship. These many roles are reflected in the two definitions

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[1] Gail M. McGuire, Jo Reger and Gail M. McGuire, *Feminist Co-Mentoring: A Model for Academic Professional Development*, Vol. 15, 2003).
[2] Lillian T. Eby, *Alternative Forms of Mentoring in Changing Organizational Environments: A Conceptual Extension of the Mentoring Literature*, Vol. 51, 1997).; W. Brad Johnson and Jennifer M. Huwe, *Getting Mentored in Graduate School*, 1st ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003).
[3] Maryann Jacobi, *Mentoring and Undergraduate Academic Success: A Literature Review*, Vol. 61, 1991).; Johnson, *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*.; Marilyn J. Haring, *The Case for a Conceptual Base for Minority Mentoring Programs*, Vol. 74, 1999).; Jean E. Girves and others, *Mentoring in a Post-Affirmative Action World*, Vol. 61, 2005).
[4] Jacobi, *Mentoring and Undergraduate Academic Success: A Literature Review*.
[5] Johnson, *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*.

of mentoring in higher education I would like to offer as a useful starting point for my work. The Council of Graduate Schools tells us mentors are:

> Advisors, people with career experience willing to share their knowledge; supporters, people who give emotional and moral encouragement; tutors, people who give specific feedback on one's performance; masters, in the sense of employers to whom one is apprenticed; sponsors, sources of information about, and aid in obtaining opportunities; models of identity, of the kind of person one should be to be an academic.[6]

Johnson offers this definition:

> Mentoring is a personal and reciprocal relationship in which a more experienced (usually older) faculty member acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced (usually younger) student or faculty member. A mentor provides the protégé with knowledge, advice, counsel, challenge, and support in the protégé's pursuit of becoming a full member of a particular profession.[7]

It must be noted that although the most profound mentoring takes place within the context of strong personal relationships, good can also come out of less intimate, instrumental assistance to students. However, all mentors give ongoing instrumental and psychosocial assistance to protégés; they develop personal relationships with their students, and this is the key point that separates an advisor from a mentor. As Johnson says, "It all begins here. Mentoring is defined by the presence of a bonded personal relationship—a relationship that takes some time to develop, is often based on some level of mutual interest or attraction, and often endures through several phases or "seasons."[8] Johnson's definition hints at the life cycle of mentorship, as do other authors; most cite the work of Kathy Kram.[9] She defined the phases of a mentoring relationship: initiation,

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[6] University of Michigan, "How to Get the Mentoring You Want: A Guide for Graduate Students at a Diverse University," http://www.rackham.umich.edu/downloads/publications/mentoring.pdf (accessed 9/29, 2008), 4.
[7] Johnson, *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*, 20.
[8] Ibid., 21.
[9] Kathy E. Kram, *Phases of the Mentor Relationship*, Vol. 26, 1983).

cultivation, separation, and redefinition. In the final phase, the relationship between mentor and protégé evolves into one of collegiality, when the protégé becomes a full member of her profession, in this case, an academic. Kram's phases continue to be widely used by many researchers with an interest in mentorship.

With an understanding that mentorship involves a deep personal relationship with the protégé, we can turn next to what the mentoring literature tells us about the qualities a strong mentor brings to the relationship. Johnson has written extensively on mentoring, and his work includes several thorough guides that are helpful to mentors and protégés alike, including a volume directed toward graduate students that is published by the American Psychological Association and another with an audience of professors who mentor undergraduates. His work is widely read and respected; using it as an exemplar can reveal how traditional mentoring approaches often wilt under the weight of history and discursive power. *The Elements of Mentoring*,[10] co-written with his own graduate mentor, effectively distills years of articles –over one thousand publications-- across all the disciplines that focus on mentorship to provide a handbook for mentors who strive for excellence in their work with protégés. Using vignettes of composite case studies to provide an example for each brief chapter, Johnson and Ridley provide "a short list of the [65] essential ingredients of mentoring: what new mentors need to know and what seasoned mentors must occasionally remember. These are the 'rules of engagement' for serious mentors."[11] The use of a military metaphor for a close personal relationship is rather disturbing. They then elaborate, dividing their "essential ingredients" into categories: skills to be learned or cultivated, personality traits, how to begin the

[10] W. Brad Johnson and Charles R. Ridley, *The Elements of Mentoring*, Rev., 2 ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
[11] Ibid., x.

relationship, knowing yourself as a mentor, closing (or transforming the relationship into the next phase), and what to do if "things go wrong." Each category has a number of points that are helpful to a discussion of mentoring across difference, but I will focus on those most useful to my endeavor: skills, traits, and how to handle difficulties.

Johnson and Ridley define a skill as "behavior designed to serve a specific purpose."[12] Among the many skills mentors should master are: careful selection of protégés; being there; knowing your protégé; affirming her; providing support, encouragement and protection when necessary; helping with professional exposure and growth; and explicitly teaching the norms, traditions, and values of your profession, including where potential pitfalls lie. Also included in this discussion are understanding when it is appropriate to self-disclose, and learning to "accept increasing friendship and mutuality."[13] With regard to "being there," the authors write:

> Wise mentors recognize that simply *being there* is often the key to creating an effective mentor-protégé bond. To that end, mentors seek out and check in with protégés, especially those who are reluctant by temperament or circumstance to approach the mentor. They manifest an attitude of invitation and interest that tends to encourage protégé contact and, when possible, they stop what they are doing to greet a protégé and address a question or concern.[14]

Interestingly, the authors inform us that simply being available is the factor that most clearly predicts the success of formal, assigned mentorships.

Johnson and Ridley also tell us that "taking the time to truly know your protégés is arguably the most important of mentoring virtues."[15] They ask us to observe and study our protégés, to figure out their strengths and talents as well as their fears and

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[12] Ibid., 1.
[13] Ibid., 40.
[14] Ibid., 6.
[15] Ibid., 8.

weaknesses; we are to listen closely and communicate well. Our communication should entail not only providing constructive feedback, but also naming protégés' gifts, for doing so will help them to believe in themselves. "The unflagging faith and confidence of a mentor may have a nearly miraculous effect on a protégé's self-confidence."[16] They describe two interlocking components of affirmation: demonstrating faith in the protégé's abilities, but also discerning her potential. "The mentor helps the protégé articulate the dream and then blesses the protégé by affirming that the dream is possible."[17] Good mentors help protégés believe they belong in their profession, that they are not imposters who will eventually be found incapable.

And what of the personality traits a mentor should hold? Who should a mentor be in order to best help a protégé? Johnson and Ridley tell us, "The important questions [for a mentor to consider] are these: (a): What are you like interpersonally? (b) What are your primary relational habits? And (c): How does it feel to be in relationship with you?"[18] In posing answers to their questions, they exhort us to be warm, to listen actively, to show unconditional regard, to be trustworthy, to show respect for protégés' values, and to use humor. If a mentor tends to have a more reticent, "cooler" personality, she can develop her ability to convey warmth by learning from good models and practicing how she communicates warmth: through sincere affirming comments. Sincerity must also be communicated nonverbally "through attentiveness, good eye contact, a soothing tone, kind facial expressions, open and relaxed body posture, and physical touch."[19] Johnson and Ridley suggest we can learn to "radiate warmth with an attitude of friendliness,

[16] Ibid., 12.
[17] Ibid., 13.
[18] Ibid., 49.
[19] Ibid., 51.

approachability and kindness";[20] we may not be able to do so naturally, but we can improve. Unconditional regard is reflected in a clear commitment to work with the protégé that is freely chosen. Importantly, we are able to communicate this "through diligent efforts to understand the protégé. Excellent mentors work at understanding their protégé's personal values and point of view; they communicate this understanding by asking clarifying questions and avoiding the tendency to superimpose themselves on the protégé."[21] This requires the mentor to be nonjudgmental, respectful, and accepting of "a protégé's thoughts, feelings, and actions."[22] As for trustworthiness, according to Johnson we demonstrate this quality by keeping promises, being consistent, reliable, and confronting problems with honesty.

Further, Johnson and Ridley tell us mentors must be self-reflective. As in any relationship, it is vital that we have an understanding of our own foibles and limitations, as well as the responsibilities and consequences of being in relationship with a protégé. Johnson and Ridley ask us to hold ourselves accountable: honor commitments and be honest. Consulting with a colleague about our mentoring can help us ensure we are doing the best we possibly can. Part of knowing ourselves as mentors also involves understanding and accepting the power differential between mentor and protégé, and our colleagues can help us to walk this tightrope. Johnson and Ridley recognize that a mentorship is first and foremost a relationship, and that it will develop and change over time into a more mutual and collegial one. Even so, they note that if a protégé is uncomfortable moving outside the hierarchical nature of the relationship, that this transformation should not be pushed. Humility is another essential element. If we can

[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 54-55.
[22] Ibid., 55.

admit our own limitations, our protégé will come to understand that neither do we expect perfection of her; each of us is human, with strengths and weaknesses.

If problems arise in the relationship, Johnson and Ridley offer some thoughts for handling this eventuality, including: honesty in the face of disappointments, a refusal to use passive strategies such as distancing in response to conflict, and in more serious ruptures, seeking outside consultation while protecting privacy, as well as documenting the problem. They tell us, too, that we must learn to recognize our own irrational thinking, to ask ourselves what part we play in any disturbance. Such self-awareness is key to our ability to become successful mentors. When working across race and gender [they do not address the differences of class and sexuality, although Johnson addresses LGBT mentoring in *On Being a Mentor*], Johnson and Ridley write that:

> …outstanding mentors are aware of their own racial schemas and stereotypes. They look for opportunities to promote and encourage the careers of junior minority personnel. They directly broach the subject of race and ethnicity with minority group protégés, yet work to match their protégé's preferences for processing race issues. They recognize that minority group protégés may have unique mentoring needs, and they work to better understand the experiences and preferences of their minority group protégés.[23]

These are potentially helpful points, even if they give the problematic impression that most mentors are white. Such a conception reinscribes the racialized power differentials of the Eurocentric academic culture. It is also of concern that Johnson and Ridley seem to believe we can gain a clear awareness of our "racial schemas" and that these can be set aside in such a way that a protégé will honestly discuss how she prefers to handle issues of race. Further, the problems of mentorship across class are left untheorized.

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[23] Ibid., 92.

Finally, Johnson[24] recognizes the reciprocal nature of mentoring, and in his thorough discussion of the undergraduate mentoring process, he informs us that studies indicate spontaneous, informal mentoring relationships, rather than formal, assigned relationships, are the most effective. A more formal relationship is often seen when a student assists with a professor's ongoing research or in the supervision of student teachers; an informal relationship might be established when college faculty or staff strike up a relationship with a student outside the boundaries of a classroom. In either case, it is a mutual choice of the individuals who enter into the relationship. Some mentoring relationships encompass both formal and informal aspects. For example, an informal mentorship may take on more formality within the context of the McNair summer program when both mentors and students are asked to complete certain tasks and report on them to the program. I would argue that these relationships can become the strongest and most useful for the McNair protégé. Informal ties and interactions can provide a reassuring foundation if and when the student begins to feel overwhelmed by the intensity of the research process and the formal aspects of the work they do together.

Traditional Concepts of Mentoring and Mentoring across Difference

Johnson does an excellent job of synthesizing a vast body of research, even so, I find that although he has exhaustively plumbed its depths, the philosophy of mentoring is undertheorized. His concept of mentoring is not sufficient to the task I and others face when difficult relations arise across difference. To his credit, Johnson believes that intentionality is critical to mentorship, and with this I must agree. His emphasis on self-reflection is significant. In his work, we find some attention given to a philosophical

[24] Johnson, *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*.

foundation when we see references to the importance of mentor qualities such as empathy or a helping orientation,[25] and his work with Ridley begins to trace such a theoretical base. I applaud the careful exposition of mentor skills and traits, and the honest appraisal of working across gender and/or race. However, his work does not go far enough. First, Johnson's work is based upon a western normative assumption that the mentoring relationship takes place between two autonomous individuals who each occupy a "side" of the mentoring pair. Within the pair, there is an understood hierarchy in which the mentor occupies the more powerful position. Johnson acknowledges this hierarchy exists, and cautions mentors to be cognizant of power dynamics. However, I posit that this hierarchical relationship and the imbalance it creates between mentor and protégé can insinuate itself into relationships across difference in a destructive way, especially given the stratified nature of our society. Moreover, the site of McNair mentoring-- the hierarchical and competitive academy— has a long history of excluding underrepresented students and there are strong, embedded power dynamics that accompany this history. It is, in many ways, a microcosm of the larger, stratified society, and the mentor/protégé relationship is a yet smaller microcosm within the academy. No matter how many mentor skills and traits Johnson enumerates, power dynamics will continue to lie between mentor and protégé and the mentorship can be disrupted by them.

Embedded as it is within the academic hierarchy, Johnson's understanding of reciprocity needs to be questioned. In defining the hallmarks of a reciprocal relationship, he writes: "Mentorships are complex, interactive, and mutually beneficial; both protégé and mentor reap rewards from the relationship."[26] There is a sense that mentor and

[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., 21.

protégé enter into a contractual relationship: if they abide by the rules, they each earn their rewards. Johnson tells us the mentor's

> [t]angible or extrinsic benefits may include reductions in workload, technical assistance, development of a loyal support base, recognition, financial rewards, and enhancement of one's own network. These benefits are not the primary motivators for many mentors. Many mentors savor the intrinsic benefits of mentoring. The most common intrinsic benefits are personal [and, as he notes elsewhere, professional] rejuvenation; excitement in working with a talented, energetic junior; and the satisfaction that comes from helping someone else succeed.[27]

Although certainly it is good if both parties feel rewarded by the mentoring relationship, Johnson's problematic understanding that we are each autonomous individuals and that the mentor is "helping" the protégé to achieve an academic goal distances mentors from protégés and reinscribes the norms of power and success that the McNair mission seeks to interrupt by diversifying the professoriate. This is particularly disturbing language when used in the context of mentorship across difference: dominant professors who see themselves as "helping" less dominant students are falling prey to discourses of disadvantage and it may seem they play, whether they intend to or not, the role of the savior who "lifts" a student "up" out of her lower place on the social hierarchy. This dynamic reverberates in the conundrum at the heart of the McNair program as well as similar opportunity programs: that we use classic academic techniques in an effort to disturb historically embedded exclusionary practices, hoping to interrupt longstanding norms such as the predominantly white male, middle class professoriate. A theoretical approach that more fully recognizes the web of personal, institutional, and discursive relationships that surround the mentorship is needed. Mentors who work across difference do indeed provide academic assistance and training to their protégés. But they

[27] Johnson and Ridley, *The Elements of Mentoring*, 105.

are called to do more: to be mindful of –and to work against-- an academic history that has included them and excluded their protégés, to view themselves not as more capable, but as competent people who have enjoyed privileges denied to others. In so deconstructing their own idea of the academic hierarchy, mentors might create a more comfortable academic space for protégés; they also open themselves to richer relationships with their students. Here, it is possible to engage in work that transforms not only the individuals who do it, but the surrounding institutional culture.

A closer examination of Johnson's points also reveals how the individualistic and meritocratic assumptions undergirding his approach limit the possibilities for both mentor and protégé, and therefore limit institutional change. His discussion of the initiation phase is instructive in this regard. Johnson insists that mentors must be selective when choosing their protégés; however, his discussion of the matter is troubling.

> Choosing protégés is like investing. You have limited resources and expect good returns. Like stocks, bonds, and mutual funds, some investments are better than others. More importantly, some investments are better matched to your personal preferences, needs, and risk tolerance. Mentors must behave like prudent investors; they must be selective in their choice of protégés. Successful mentors are vigilant and discerning of the traits, talents, and interests of their junior personnel and careful to embark on mentorships only with those who match them well.[28]

Johnson also cites research that mentors are "drawn to talented and high-performing juniors, not those who most need help."[29] He further indicates that we invest in students who show academic aptitude and therefore are likely to attain academic and career success.[30] In academia, he also notes the problematic process known as cloning. "This cloning phenomenon occurs when professors find themselves attracted to juniors who

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[28] Ibid., 3.
[29] Johnson, *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*, 28.
[30] Ibid.

remind them of themselves in important ways, and in whom they can create mirror images of themselves."[31] On the surface, this advice seems to make sense: one cannot truly be a mentor if too many protégés demand time and attention, therefore, choices must be made. But we can easily see through the veil of selectivity; it does not take much imagination to understand how it limits access to mentoring and the possibilities of relationships across difference.

Some unpacking of the various problems with this approach is helpful. First, it continues the legacy of exclusion: if a professor only mentors those students who are most like herself in terms of interests and personal traits, this limits the pool of potential protégés from the outset. Such selectivity has another repercussion, whether intended or not: the mentor's academic discipline is not stretched and challenged by outsiders' perceptions. Instead, the parochialism inherent to the academy is reinforced. Indeed, Johnson names friendship and academic support as benefits to mentors. "Over the years, some of an active mentor's most supportive, loyal, and enjoyable collegial connections may be with former protégés."[32] This idea hints at the development of future colleagues as one of the goals of mentorship. It implies that the social and academic bonds a protégé forms with her mentor will influence her future work, and that she will maintain the disciplinary norms and expectations she has been taught. The existing institutional framework is reinforced, and little terrain is ceded to the newcomer. In this type of mentorship, the outsider does not disturb the status quo with her unexpected, and perhaps bewildering, ideas.

[31] Ibid., 28.
[32] Ibid., 12-13.

Another troubling aspect to the seemingly benign idea of selectivity concerns race. When discussing race as a factor in protégé selection, Johnson explicitly deals with the (conscious or unconscious) desire to mentor students we identify with most closely, noting that this might include the dimension of race. He writes that "it is imperative that majority mentors actively and deliberately mentor across race,"[33] especially given the fact that there are so few minority faculty in higher education. He notes that if we assume that same-race mentorship is necessary or preferable for the student, we limit her options. Johnson's remedy is problematic, however. It is embedded within his concept of mentoring as a means to assimilate students into the existing academic culture, never questioning the value of doing so. Although his point that mentors ought to deliberately work across race is well taken, he still assumes that we can make accurate assessments of a student's abilities, that competence is always apparent: he assumes we can know the student, that there are clear markers of a student's academic potential, and that a mentor always knows what to be on the lookout for. Neither does he take into account the fact that underrepresented students might not feel comfortable displaying their talents in the academy's generally hostile environment. Nor does he factor in that a student's gifts might not be easy for a traditional mentor to identify, for the simple fact that she may not have seen them before: talents, insights, abilities may be missed or overlooked, and the broadening of the academy will suffer for this. The potential for "success" as defined by an exclusionary, meritocratic, hierarchical institution --and its often limited understanding of worthwhile knowledge-- becomes the standard by which we measure a student's worth. The obvious limitations of selecting a protégé based on personal characteristics are exacerbated by the assumption that those worthy of a mentor's time

[33] Ibid., 177.

and attention are already performing well, and they are very likely pursuing interests similar to the mentor's. Taken together, a mentorship based on Johnson's selection principles may easily miss underrepresented students.

Although he begins to address mentorship across race and sexuality, another major gap I find in Johnson's work is the lack of deep attention to the intricacies of work across difference. Merely being aware of race and being willing to deal honestly with it does not speak to the webs of historical relations and societal stratifications that can ensnare both mentor and protégé without their knowing. There are similar problems when working across class, gender, and sexuality. The academy's patterns of exclusion may, quite understandably, lead protégés to believe they do not belong in higher education. It is disquieting that, when translated into Johnson's individualistic worldview, predictable cross-group tensions are seen through a lens that is likely to blame protégés for their lack of initiative or confidence. Johnson names several: the possibility that some students may have difficulty requesting help or sharing weaknesses; mistrust; and differences in interpersonal style, some of which may be culturally-based.[34] His statements see the protégé through a problematic deficit lens. They are a symptom of the unbalanced power relations and dominant discourses discussed earlier, discourses that have already defined the protégé as a student in need of "help" from those in "higher" academic and social positions. The statement is distressing and reflects deeper problems with Johnson's work. Not only does it assume that we can know our students' inner world, but we ascribe meaning to their actions in a way that lays any relational trouble at their feet, absolving ourselves of responsibility beyond understanding this assumed personal dynamic. The result is that when problems arise and the relationship breaks down, Johnson looks first to

[34] Johnson and Huwe, *Getting Mentored in Graduate School*.

the student: did she fulfill her part of the mentoring contract? If not, is it due to some personal or cultural deficit?

By contrast, in Johnson's writings, the mentors are at fault only when they have selected poorly or broken the rules: when the ethical contract between the mentor and protégé as individuals has been breached by an inappropriate sexual action, for example. With only the language of individuals to describe the intricacies of the mentor-protégé relationship, there is no way to even entertain the thought that tensions are to be expected in mentoring across difference, even if both parties are trying to attend to and nurture the relationship. Johnson's response to his list of concerns in working across difference is to ask mentors to implement certain strategies: establishing trust; learning about the protégé's cultural values and experiences; and responding to each student as an individual, seeing "each minority group protégé as unique and complex [and relying on] individual interaction rather than racial categories in formulating perceptions and reactions to students."[35] Even though Johnson is surely right to suggest that mentors address protégés as unique individuals, his stance prevents us from seeing that two unique individuals can also be caught within webs of power relationships that bring tension into their interactions. His individualistic understanding of mentor and protégé cannot address this important concern. Further, his final suggestion holds undertones of a problematic colorblind approach to relationships.

We have already discussed the concerns with treating each student as an individual in the normalized western understanding of an ahistoric, autonomous subject: such a view dismisses the power imbalances and history of marginalization that trouble the relationship in the first place. The other problems he lists --such as mistrust and style

[35] Ibid., 173.

differences-- as well as the suggestions that Johnson offers to correct them, may each find their genesis in unbalanced power relations, but they bear individual inspection. Especially pertinent is his belief that we can establish trust and understand another's culture and values, for these are interlocking concepts. Establishing trust in cross-group relationships is not necessarily as easily accomplished as Johnson would like. His section on trust is cited here in its entirety:

> Trust in a mentorship hinges on a series of positive, reliable, and protégé-promoting professional behaviors on the part of the mentor. Establishing trust may be more important in the early phases of cross-race mentorships (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004). Trust is promoted when a mentor acknowledges the effects of overt and implicit racism—both in society and in the institution—when the mentor accepts the protégé's personal experiences of racism as real, and communicates a genuine interest in the protégé's own narrative of being a racial minority. Mentors must additionally be attentive to historical legacies and power dynamics (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004) that may inhibit minority students from accepting more reciprocal roles with faculty.[36]

In my experience, trust is not merely a matter of keeping promises, being consistent and reliable, confronting problems and mistakes honestly, showing integrity and following codes of confidentiality.[37] Some underrepresented students have learned to mistrust those who appear to be white authority figures. As Maria Lugones hauntingly asks, "…why and to what purpose do I trust myself to you…[a game of] cat and mouse just for your entertainment….?"[38] Parents and extended family with a history of marginalization by the dominant group are well within reason to pass their life lessons along to the younger generation,[39] and the students themselves have often had their own negative experiences,

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[36] Johnson, *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*, 174-175.
[37] Johnson and Ridley, *The Elements of Mentoring*, 67.
[38] María Lugones, "Hablando Cara a Cara/Speaking Face to Face: An Exploration of Ethnocentric Racism," in *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation Books, 1990), 50.
[39] Feagin, Vera and Imani, *The Agony of Education: Black Students at White Colleges and Universities.*

such as the microaggressions described in Chapter 1, which took place in educational settings. Johnson's pointers do not speak to these circumstances, and the difficulties they create need to be investigated. I may believe I am doing all I can to establish trust with a student, yet the lived relationship tells me otherwise. Perhaps it is disturbed by just this dynamic. I need to be prepared to move forward, without any assurance of mutual trust; I need to take the risk, to step out of the carefully balanced contract between mentor and protégé.

Neither can we truly come to understand another's life experiences; we can learn about her culture and values, and this may help us to be more trustworthy. However, it does not allow us into the mystery of the person seated in front of us. I may believe I am not responding to my students as if they are stereotypes, that I am learning about their culture and values, but I can be caught up short and blindsided by differences of which I have only an inkling. Johnson's exhortation for us to understand others is quite problematic in a cross-group context and goes far deeper than differences in interpersonal style. For example, do I really understand what it means to a first-generation Latina to move several states away from her family in order to pursue a graduate degree? A major transition such as this is accompanied by the difficulty of entering a predominantly white, Eurocentric institutional environment where power dynamics are likely to marginalize her and she has yet to establish a support system. It is a difficult choice to make, and is complicated by the fact that her family may have only a vague understanding of the world she is becoming a part of and the work that she does. Some parents would prefer their daughters stay close and marry: a bachelor's degree is a big enough achievement they are told, and not without reason. It is indeed quite an accomplishment and the family

bonds that might hold the student near home are to be admired. It is not merely the protégé's education, but her accomplishments will ripple out to affect the entire family. My world was not like this: I must learn to honor my students' family relationships and still encourage them to work toward their academic dreams. This speaks to the broader problem at play: learning to examine closely the limitations of my understanding and ability to respond, to allow the mystery of the student in front of me to unfold, and to respond to her as sensitively as I possibly can. Importantly, this same dynamic clouds a mentor's ability to sense a student's academic potential. Johnson's approach to protégé selection does not allow for a student's academic life to unfold in all its mystery and wonder. Limiting our choice of protégés, and making false assumptions about other students, results in foreclosed possibilities for those we do not deem worthy of our time.

In the end, Johnson seems to abandon his analysis of the difficulties posed in mentoring relationships across difference. His ultimate response is to encourage "minority" students to develop what he refers to as secondary mentorships: peer-to-peer and team mentoring relationships, or to seek a same-group mentor in a different department or within a professional organization.[40] Although peer group and team mentoring have shown powerful educational results,[41] these are clearly not always the best solution. If our intent is to mentor underrepresented students and diversify the academy, there is no real substitute for the guidance of a senior scholar, although she must be open and responsive to new ideas. A same-group mentor in another department may provide vital social and emotional support, but students deserve and need a mentor who can guide them to success in their chosen field. Further, his suggestions papers over

[40] Johnson and Huwe, *Getting Mentored in Graduate School*.
[41] McGuire, Reger and McGuire, *Feminist Co-Mentoring: A Model for Academic Professional Development*.

the fact that same-group mentors do not necessarily share a student's experiences and mind-set. Johnson's assumption that they do dismisses the differences that always lie between two people.

Mentorship on the Boundary

Mike Rose's narrative offers insight into the ways historical and social factors complicate mentoring an underrepresented student into the academy. By sharing his feelings about school at each step of the way, Rose helps the reader appreciate what high school and college were like for him as a first-generation student of very modest means. His mentors' actions and attitudes, and the responses these elicited from Rose, allow us to consider many of the factors that separate Johnson's mentorship and the sort I envision. *Lives on the Boundary*[42] weaves together Rose's personal educational journey with his later work teaching "America's educationally underprepared" in several distinctive settings: an elementary enrichment program, a veteran's program, and the UCLA tutoring center. His book is a mix of "autobiography, case study, and commentary"[43] that he realized in the writing were all part of the same fabric. His story reveals mentors who –at several critical junctures-- reached out to him across the differences that lay between them. It is worthwhile to examine these relationships for illustrations of what is needed to work in more profound and sophisticated ways than are possible in Johnson's vision. Rose himself numbered among the underprepared, and he would very likely have been eligible for the McNair program had it existed when he went to school. For this reason, too, his story is very useful to my work.

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[42] Mike Rose, *Lives on the Boundary: A Moving Account of the Struggles and Achievements of America's Educationally Underprepared* (New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Penguin Books, 1990; 1989).
[43] Ibid., 8.

When Rose paints a picture of his childhood in a poor neighborhood of Los Angeles, it seems rather dismal and limiting. In summing it up, he writes:

> I developed a picture of human existence that rendered it short and brutish or sad and aimless or long and quiet with rewards like afternoon naps, the evening newspaper, walks around the block, occasional letters from children in other states. When, years later, I was introduced to humanistic psychologists like Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, with their visions of self-actualization, or even Freud with his sober dictum about love and work, it all sounded like a glorious fairy tale, a magical account of a world full of possibility, full of hope and empowerment.[44]

A weak student, Rose was the child of Italian immigrant parents who, after the close of the family restaurant, had moved from industrial Pennsylvania to California when he was only seven. The family hoped his father's worsening arteriosclerosis would be eased in the warm climate, and that young Mike would have a better future than the one that seemed to await him in Altoona. Neither parent had received much education: his mother had to quit school in the seventh grade in order to work, and his father had just barely begun elementary school in Italy. Even so, they tried to encourage the topics that piqued their only child's interests –saving up to buy him a chemistry set or a telescope-- but the fact was they could not afford lots of books, nor could they help him navigate the maze of American K-12 education.

Rose was not by any means a good student in elementary or middle school, and without any fuss from the family, he was shunted off to the vocational track in his central Los Angeles Catholic high school. In actuality, this had been a mistake. His courses had been determined by placement test scores that were not his own: he had been confused with another child with the same last name.

> The other Rose apparently didn't do very well, for I was placed in the vocational track, a euphemism for bottom level. Neither I nor my parents

[44] Ibid.,18.

> realized what this meant. We had no sense that Business Math, Typing, and English-Level D were dead ends. The current spate of reports on the schools criticizes parents for not involving themselves in the education of their children. But how would someone like Tommy Rose, with his two years of Italian schooling, know what to ask? And what sort of pressure could an exhausted waitress apply?[45]

Subjected to social and academic microaggressions similar to those I discuss in Chapter 1,[46] Rose describes his escape from the vocational track when he was placed in sophomore biology. Brother Clint taught all the sections of this course, unlike many of the other core classes. He responds to the mystery of the student before him, making no assumptions about him. He "puzzled over this Voc. Ed. kid who was racking up 98s and 99s on his tests. He checked the school's records and discovered the error."[47] [The high school's technology of selectivity proved to be flawed, and one wonders how the other Rose performed in the advanced classes he would not otherwise have been allowed to take.] As arbitrarily as Rose had been placed in vocational classes, he is serendipitously allowed to move into the College Prep track at the beginning of his junior year. He struggles through the first year academically; his father dies toward the end of it.

In senior English, he meets the first of the teachers I regard as his mentors: Jack MacFarland. Rose describes MacFarland as a "beatnik who was born too late [who had] a master's degree from Columbia, and decided, at twenty-six, to find a little school and teach his heart out."[48] Because he did not hold a teaching credential, he found a position at a private school. With his rumpled clothing and stained teeth, Rose says,

> At first, we couldn't believe this guy, thought he slept in his car. But within no time, he had us so startled with work that we didn't much worry about where he slept…. We wrote three or four essays a month. We read a

[45] Ibid., 24.
[46] Ibid., 25.
[47] Ibid., 30.
[48] Ibid., 32.

> book every two to three weeks…. He brought a prep school curriculum to Mercy High.[49]

Rose responds to MacFarland's strategies, and begins to read, something he hadn't really done since reading through the science fiction section in his elementary school library. He admits to not being the best student in class, but a hard-working one.

> …MacFarland had hooked me. He tapped my old interest in reading and creating stories. He gave me a way to feel special by using my mind. And he provided a role model that wasn't shaped on physical prowess alone, and something inside of me that I wasn't quite aware of responded to that.[50]

When, in December, Jack MacFarland asked Rose where he was going to college, he reveals that he had not given it much thought, and did not understand college entrance requirements. Rose had felt college was not in his future, and his words could have been written by many McNair Scholars. "No one in the family had gone to college; only two of my uncles had completed high school. I figured I'd get a night job and go to the local junior college…. But I hadn't even prepared for that."[51] MacFarland doesn't accept no for an answer. He has noted Rose's ability, in the only way it is visible to him, and he tells Rose "Listen, you can write,"[52] insisting he apply. Rose is not accepted to USC or UCLA, but MacFarland calls professors and administrators at his own alma mater, Loyola University, acting on Rose's behalf without his knowledge or permission. Rose was accepted on a probationary status, and with MacFarland's intervention, also received a loan. During the final semester of high school, MacFarland created a special English course for Rose and several other students, a group Rose dubbed the "fledgling literati";[53]

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[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 34.
[51] Ibid., 35.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

they would even receive the occasional invitation to MacFarland's book-filled apartment. Of this time, Rose writes that he absorbed a lot of information, even if it was

> …hardly the stuff of deep understanding. But it was an introduction…, a Baedeker to a vocabulary of ideas, and it felt good at the time to know all these words. With hindsight I realize how layered and important that knowledge was. It enabled me to do things in the world.[54]

Rose's collegiate experience mirrors what I may hear from McNair Scholars and could have been an interview in Lubrano's book. He may have entered Loyola with a small circle of friends from the special group of "fledgling literati," but he describes feeling at sea academically, amid people whose life experience is totally different from his own.

> Faculty would announce office hours. If I had had the sense, I would have gone, but they struck me as aloof and somber men, and I felt stupid telling them I was…well—stupid. …I fortified myself with defiance: I worked up an imitation of the old priest who was my Latin teacher, and I kept my ROTC uniform crumpled in the greasy trunk of John's Plymouth….
>
> Many of my classmates came from and lived in a world very different from my own. The campus literary magazine would publish excerpts from the journals of upperclassmen traveling across Europe…With the exception of one train trip back to Altoona, I had never been out of Southern California, and this translated, for me, into some personal inadequacy.[55]

Once again, MacFarland intercedes on behalf of Rose and the other Mercy High students, and once more he is behind the scenes. He contacts some of his former professors in the English Department, and Dr. Carothers agrees to look out for the group, to design special seminars for them that would allow them "to read and write a lot under the close supervision of a faculty member."[56] Carothers' class was rigorous and interesting; it filled academic gaps for Rose, but:

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[54] Ibid., 36.
[55] Ibid., 43.
[56] Ibid., 45-46.

> …He started his best work once class was over. Being a professor was, for Frank Carothers, a profoundly social calling: he enjoyed the classroom, and he seemed to love the more informal contacts with those he taught, those he once taught, and those who stopped by just to get a look at this guy. He stayed in his office until about four each afternoon, leaning back in his old swivel chair, hands clasped behind his head, his bow tie tight against his collar. He had strong opinions, and he'd get irritated if you missed class, and he sometimes gave quirky advice—but there he'd be shaking his head sympathetically as students poured out their troubles. It was pure and primary for Frank Carothers: Teaching allowed him daily to fuse the joy he got from reading literature…with his deep pleasure in human community.[57]

With Carothers, Rose says that he was able to sense more possibility in the world, and more connection with others.

It was an enticing alternative to the isolated life he had been creating for himself, in a trailer behind his mother's house. Similar to MacFarland's literati, Carothers' English Society brought life into learning, and created opportunities to connect beyond the classroom. Bringing Rose into the academy involved more than face-to- face meetings in the office; Carothers helped Rose to be comfortable with company and discussions that were, at first, foreign to him. Informal interactions opened the possibilities for intellectual exchange. The students would head for the Carothers' home for barbecues where "we would go way past sunset, talking to Dr. Carothers and to each other about books and sports and currently despised professors, sometimes letting off steam and sometimes learning something new. And Frank Carothers would keep us fed...."[58] There are stories of others who assisted Rose to enter the academic conversation. One was an initiate into the priesthood, Don Johnson, who invited him to discuss philosophy, and who became an ongoing presence and support for him. Of Father Albertson, who taught Shakespeare, Rose writes that he brought "us inside the circle [of

[57] Ibid., 52-53.
[58] Ibid., 53.

the exclusive academic club], nudging us out into the chatter, always just behind us, whispering to try this step, then this one, encouraging us to feel the moves for ourselves."[59] Finally, Ted Erlandson provided the sort of teaching Rose needed when he "was struggling to express increasingly complex ideas, and couldn't get the language straight: Words…piled up like cars in a serial wreck. I was encountering a new language—the language of the academy—and was trying to find my way around in it."[60] Erlandson

> …worked as a craftsman works, with particulars, and he shuttled back and forth continually between print and voice, making me breathe my prose, making me hear the language I'd generated in silence. Perhaps he was more directive than some would have liked, but, to be truthful, direction was what I needed. I was easily frustrated, and it didn't take a lot to make me doubt myself. When teachers would write "no" or "awkward" or "rewrite" alongside the sentences I had worked so hard to produce, I would be peeved and disappointed. "Well, what the hell *do* they want?" I'd grumble to no one in particular. So Ted Erlandson's linguistic parenting felt just right: a modeling of grace until it all slowly, slowly began to work itself into the way I shaped language.[61]

We learn through Rose's stories that these four men were clearly gifted teachers.

> They modeled critical inquiry and linguistic precision and grace, and they provided various cognitive maps for philosophy and history and literature. They encouraged me to make connections and to enter into conversations –present and past—to see what talking a particular kind of talk would enable me to do with a thorny philosophical problem or a difficult literary text. And it was all alive. It transpired in backyards and on doorsteps and inside offices as well as in the classroom…. They liked books and ideas, and they liked to talk about them in ways that fostered growth rather than established dominance. They lived their knowledge.[62]

They were more than teachers, however, they were mentors, and Rose calls them by this term. Some of what we can see in their work reflects the best of Johnson, but there are

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[59] Ibid., 58.
[60] Ibid., 54.
[61] Ibid., 55-56.
[62] Ibid., 58.

ways in which, through Rose's story, we can sense how they deepen Johnson's approach. Tracing the contours of their mentorship is vital to pulling back the curtain a bit on this sometimes mysterious relationship.

Moving into the Boundary to Transform Modernistic Mentorship

Rose's story offers a portrait of mentoring that can inform my study; he points toward ideas to consider as I reconceptualize mentorship. Although students of color face daunting challenges when they enter historically white-dominated universities, and Rose's relationships with mentors lack the added complications of race, gender, and sexuality, it is quite true that he grew up without the social and academic capital that most of his classmates at Loyola brought to their college educations. As I have noted, he is very much like a McNair Scholar in this regard. Further, he has no reason to trust in an educational system that shunted him into a vocational high school curriculum by mistake, and where he had experienced such microaggressions as a teacher's "joke" about Wops.[63] Yet, Jack MacFarland and his college mentors are able to connect with Rose and to encourage him to press on, nurturing his talents. He is eventually nominated for a fellowship to attend the English department at UCLA of which he writes: "Good Lord. Fours years before, I couldn't have shaken out their doormat."[64] He is a successful enough graduate student, but he does not remain in the program. Perhaps this was the limit of the four men's mentorship, the assumption they each brought to their relationships with Rose: that the goal of his successful passage through college would be to follow a trajectory through graduate school that reflected their own academic paths. He did not, in the end, choose to emulate these men academically, finding his initial graduate

[63] Ibid., 25.
[64] Ibid., 65.

work to be isolating and the competitive environment not to his liking. However, the fact remains that his high school and college mentors were able to nourish him. They pointed Rose toward the course of his life's work with marginalized students-- those whose educational lives are remarkably similar to his own early years. Somehow, these four men managed to forge an approach to mentoring that reached their student. Even though Rose's academic story to this point features an all-male cast, the differences that do lie between Rose and his mentors are significant, and a close look at their relationships illustrates an alternative to Johnson's mentorship based upon mystery, mutuality and community, and a more sophisticated concept of trust. Rose's relationships hint at what is possible.

First and foremost, Rose's mentors did not accept Johnson's advice on selecting a protégé. They were not merely scouting out younger versions of themselves; they looked beyond the limited, traditional view of the struggling student, they were open to the mystery of Mike Rose. Neither did they accept the meritocratic assumptions of our educational institutions. Had they done so, Mike would very likely never have found his way to college; the possibilities for his life and career would have been far more limited, especially given the "picture of human existence" he had developed in his formative years. In high school, MacFarland "[taught] his heart out"; he did not care that some of his students had already been pegged as incapable of succeeding in college. Rather, he accepts all the students in his class and raises the academic bar for all, bringing them a curriculum far tougher than they had previously experienced. Rose rises to the challenge, and MacFarland sees to it that Rose applies to college: one year of high school helps MacFarland know Rose well enough to understand he can write, and that is the only cue

he needs to act on Rose's behalf. Further, he intercedes when necessary in order to negotiate Rose's acceptance to Loyola. When Rose does not fare well academically during his first year at Loyola, neither does MacFarland allow normalized Eurocentric concepts of power and individualism to encroach upon the possibilities for him, or for their relationship. He does not step back and say, "Oh well, I tried," and decide to see Rose through a deficit lens of failure. He does not accept failure as his fate; again, Johnson's sense of selectivity is cast aside. Instead, MacFarland responded to Rose's needs in ways of which he was not even at first aware, smoothing his path through college after the rough first year. Rather than accept the received wisdom of individual merit, he finds a way to reach past this concept. He remains in relationship with Rose beyond high school, and helps to create a web of university mentors who can guide and sustain Rose. When his student stumbled, he took up the challenge of genuine response, and recruited several Loyola professors to do this, as well.

This small group of professors also accepted Rose on his own terms. They provided an academic community for him, underscoring the social nature of learning. Rose's vibrant descriptions of the learning relationships he developed with all four teachers show a living, breathing education that transcends Johnson's ideal. Learning extends far beyond the classroom and office spaces of the university: it enters homes, apartments, the surrounding community, and even goes to the beach. These are personal and bonded relationships; the mentors do not distance themselves from the students but allow themselves to be vulnerable, inviting Rose and the other members of his group into their lives. Rose names this characteristic when he tells us that his professors wanted to foster growth rather than establish dominance. These men did not place themselves

"above" the students; they did not cultivate their power, placing themselves further "up" on the academic hierarchy. They manifest their nonhierarchical approach by not putting physical barriers between themselves and their students. Although we do not hear directly from the mentors, and cannot know for certain what they might consider the benefits of their relationships with Rose, their openness to him is significant because it prepares the way for them to be changed by the relationship, too. In so doing, they challenge the hierarchical norms of the institution and embrace a deeper notion of reciprocity than Johnson espouses. Carothers' love of human community is the most insight we are given, but it is enough for us to realize that he challenges individualistic assumptions of the dominant educational norms. For Carothers, community is more important, as is assuming responsibility for the relationship. Carothers and MacFarland take initiative beyond the usual expectations of a mentoring relationship. Their demonstrated understanding of reciprocity is far more profound than Johnson's ledger-like give and take. Because we learn about his mentors only through Rose's eyes, we cannot know for certain what they may have learned from him; the depths of their mutuality is not fathomable. But Rose is certain that Carothers, for one, loved human community, and that this forms a crucial component of his relationships with students. Carothers seems to intuitively understand the web of relationships that holds his work: students, his family, himself—they are all present, and important to an evening of learning, as is the lovely ocean-front setting. There is community, respect, and a love of learning that binds it all together.

Just as important as the community faculty form with students, is the community they encourage among the students themselves. Rose experienced this in both his high

school seminar with MacFarland, as well as his college course with Carothers. With great sensitivity, both men work with the entire cohort of students from Our Lady of Mercy High School: they create a web of relationships that sustains these young men. In so doing, they reveal an understanding of teaching as a relationship that is embedded within an entire web of relationships. Their work does not exist outside of time and history, outside of life and community. Neither is the web of support limited to academics. Carothers is a sympathetic listener and will engage on a more personal level with students. We can only imagine how the mentors are changed by these relationships. What do they learn from these students, young men who had been on the margins of education, yet who bring sharp minds and so much vitality to the university? Perhaps they knew they could never completely understand the experiences of someone like Rose, but they did recognize what he could contribute to the classroom and the academic conversation. They wanted him to feel that he belonged, and they made no assumptions about his abilities based on, for instance, his early efforts to write academically.

Given Rose's personal educational history, it is quite remarkable that his relationships with mentors allow him to engage with academics as deeply as he does. The willingness of all four mentors to be open to him, and to act out of a deeply responsive sense of reciprocity, establishes a base on which trust can begin to be built. One critical facet of their responsiveness is revealed in how they make themselves accountable to Rose. They do not abandon him when he performs poorly; they do not send him off to a mentor who is purportedly "more like him" as Johnson might do. They reach out to him, and then they reach out again and again. This is necessary because, at least until they arrive at a certain amount of trust, Rose tells us directly that he would not have sought out

professors to attend office hours. Whether this was due to lack of knowledge, self-protection, or wariness of entering academic spaces that he did not find welcoming, we cannot know for certain. But clearly this dynamic should not come as a surprise, if we take into consideration the climate and microaggressions that students such as the young Rose must have faced every day. Johnson does encourage mentors to build trust by acknowledging the "effects [on protégés] of covert and implicit racism—both in society and in the institution"[65] and to "discuss minority group stresses and concerns with…minority colleagues"[66] in order to understand what protégés face. Unfortunately, my lived experience tells me this is sometimes not enough. Rather, a mentor who listens to stories of alienation in the academy, and asks for others to educate her about their plight, may be interpreted as subjecting others to a voyeuristic colonial gaze. Such a gaze objectifies protégés and distances us from them. Within our troubled ahistorical and hierarchical context, it is not enough, but must be replaced with a richer attitude of mutuality. Rose's mentors had this, and their actions reflect a desire not only to understand his life stories, but to honor his knowledge and gifts in a manner that does not reinscribe an academic hierarchy.

Rose's writing mentor, Ted Erlandson, is worth our focus at this point. He is a more directive mentor, something that a discussion of trust, understanding, and mutuality might lead us to think is not the preferred way to relate to a protégé. Yet, as a writing teacher, he provided exactly what Mike Rose needed at that point in his education. MacFarland had apprehended Rose's gift with writing. Granted, it was a somewhat meritocratic assessment of Rose's talents; nevertheless, MacFarland saw a possibility and

[65] Johnson, *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*, 175.
[66] Ibid., 174.

an academic identity Rose did not see for himself, sought Rose out, and encouraged him in spite of the messages both might have received about the futility of doing so. However, it is Erlandson who Rose credits with "…[getting] in there with his pencil and [working] on my style."[67] They sat side by side at a big desk, and Erlandson "would sweep books and pencils across the scratched veneer, and back over the sentences he wanted me to revise."[68] Once again, we see how one of Rose's mentors brought a living presence to the academic work. Rather than simply being told to revise a section of his writing, Erlandson demonstrated how. Reading the words out loud, correcting usage by sending Rose to the dictionary, rereading a sentence that has been simplified to correct its awkwardness-- the tutorial give and take dealt with the specifics of language that Rose had produced. Erlandson did not use grammatical terms, and "he never got technical."[69] Although he offered correction and advice, it was done respectfully: "Let's read it…. Sounds better, doesn't it?"[70] Rose's words were spoken aloud so that they received voice and a life off the printed page. Erlandson modeled his craft while Rose listened and learned, and eventually was able to do for himself what his mentor had shown him. As we strive to express complex ideas in academic writing, Rose says, we

> …miss the mark a thousand times along the way. The botched performances, though, are part of it all, and developing writers will grow through them if they are able to write for people who care about language, people who are willing to sit with them and help them as they struggle to write about difficult things. That is what Ted Erlandson did for me.[71]

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[67] Rose, *Lives on the Boundary: A Moving Account of the Struggles and Achievements of America's Educationally Underprepared,* 55.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid., 54.

Even though it was directive, there is still a one-on-one, mutually respectful relationship at the heart of this mentorship. There is an understanding and appreciation of who Rose is as a person and a thinker, as well as the worth he brings to the academy; this is implicit in the amount of time Erlandson devotes to helping him become a writer. Erlandson, along with the MacFarland, Carothers and the other mentors, honors the mystery of Mike Rose.

Revisiting Ethics

In light of the limitations of Johnson's rule-oriented, contractual approach to mentorship, I wish to revisit the ethics of mentorship and pedagogy across difference. Rose's mentors sought him out and engaged in relationships with him that were both community-building and academic. They demonstrated an attitude of reciprocity and respect that began with recognizing his intellectual gifts, and then reached far deeper than Johnson's descriptions of mentorship. They seemed to have an innate sense of the importance of mystery and the complicated nature of nurturing trust across difference. More and more college students are, like Rose, among the first in their families to seek higher education, and our society grows more and more diverse every decade. However, old academic structures remain, and our history of exclusion lives in the higher education curriculum. We must theorize mentoring anew, and negotiate a different path with our students if we are to reinvigorate our institutions. If we follow the example provided by Mike Rose's mentors, it may lead us into a messier, but more thoughtful and robust mentorship, one that can inform work in our complex academic and social milieu.

MacFarland, Carothers, and Erlandson put their relationship with Rose at the center of their mentoring. They do not succumb to deficit discourses, and even though they do not necessarily understand his background, they manage to communicate their

regard and respect to him in such a way that he, too, is called to respond to each of them. Rose and his mentors all take risks, and enter fully into their relationships. They are sustained by and created within a web of relationships. Rather than warily selecting students like themselves, his mentors made a broader and deeper commitment to those in their classrooms; they welcomed the mystery of their students and took risks in mentorship. Rather than a reciprocal relationship between two individuals who reap benefits for themselves within a decontextualized, hierarchical dyad, they realized the relationship called them to a mutuality based upon responsibility and responsiveness. Rather than take a contractual approach to trust, they allowed themselves to be led by the relationship. They engaged in a process, knowing that protégé and mentor are each necessary to other and to the meaning produced by their relationship, yet they could not know what it might mean: would it bring pain? joy? change? It was a risky business. Ultimately, Rose's mentors accepted responsibility in a profound way Johnson does not: in acknowledging the mystery of the other and the limits of their understanding, responsiveness became their most valuable trait, and they opened themselves to the possibility of being changed by the relationship. Protégés can lead mentors onto new academic, relational-- and sometimes even emotional-- ground, just as mentors lead them into academia. A genuine trust, the fruit of the hard work of relationship, can now replace Johnson's mentoring contract; personal and institutional transformation become possible.

CHAPTER 3

RESPONSIVE MENTORSHIP

Mentoring outsiders into the academy, so that it is reinvigorated by increasingly diverse ideas and worldviews, calls for an open, responsive approach to students. Rose's teachers brought this type of mentorship to life. They did not view Mike as an object of knowledge: he was not an exemplar of "poor first-generation student" for them to study and observe. Neither were they constrained by academic rules, whether explicit or hidden, that can disaffirm a young scholar who comes from a nontraditional background. Firm rules governing behavior and authority add layers of distance between students and professors; instead, the possibility of violating norms to cultivate responsiveness often resides in the informal interactions of a Frank Carothers where a different behavioral code takes precedence and academics are just one aspect of the relationship. Perhaps most crucial to encouraging Rose on his academic path, they did not limit their understanding of his abilities to his performance – or lack thereof— on traditional academic tasks. Had they been limited by the rules of academic performance and reward based upon the received disciplinary standards, they would have seen only the unprepared writer, not the bright mind struggling to express itself with clarity. His educational possibilities –and the path of his life's calling-- could easily have been foreclosed upon by Rose's professors had they chosen to follow the simple rule-bound

route of academic exclusion. But they saw the light of intelligence in Rose and chose the more difficult path, finding ways to make it brighter.

In the end, Mike Rose himself became a professor, one who has contributed to scholarly discussions of education in the U.S. with such books as *Possible Lives: The Promise of Public Education in America*,[1] *The Mind at Work: Valuing the Intelligence of the American Worker*,[2] and most recently *Why School?*,[3] in which he asks us to rethink the purpose of educating our children and youth. His life's work has made the academy stronger and more inclusive. In addition to his well-received works highlighting the intelligence and life trajectories of those who do not fit easily into the American educational system, Rose clearly brings a new outlook to the university and his relationships with students. Later portions of *Lives on the Boundary* detail his experience as a teacher, tutor, and mentor to diverse groups of academically underprepared students. His work in a veteran's program and at the UCLA Tutoring Center are most important to understanding the approach he takes to mentoring when he is cast in that role. Interestingly, the Tutoring Center was an integral part of the UCLA Educational Opportunity Program, which arose from the same discursive and historical ground as the McNair program. In his tutoring and teaching, Rose is always open, always curious, always willing to examine his own limitations: he strives to make no assumptions about his students in spite of academic setbacks they may have previously experienced. He never forgets the social and historical forces that have created their particular academic

[1] Mike Rose, *Possible Lives: The Promise of Public Education in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1995).
[2] Mike Rose, *The Mind at Work: Valuing the Intelligence of the American Worker* (New York: Viking, 2004).
[3] Mike Rose, *Why School?: Reclaiming Education for all of Us* (New York: New Press : Distributed by Perseus Distribution, 2009).

predicaments, and he squarely faces the discursive dilemmas that confront opportunity programs. He is always interested in his students' perspectives, even if they do not align with those of some prototypic "ideal" student. Instead, Rose makes a significant effort to tease out what his students might be thinking, and he is intrigued by their ideas, even when they counter his academic expectations. Such an approach would also benefit the academically well-prepared.

Recall the young woman from Lubrano's book who left university to enter the Army: she could not abide spending time analyzing Jane Austen's work. It felt frivolous. What might have been her experience of the academy if her professor had engaged her critique and its implications for our social history? Rather than accepting her silence in the classroom, and ultimately accepting her departure from the university, a responsive professor might have added her insights to the conversation and, in turn, members of the class might have been brought to a more complex understanding of others' experiences of literature. The professor might well have needed to more carefully consider the structure of his classroom discussions in order to encourage a quiet or reticent student to contribute. However, teaching methods to engage each student are commonly studied and written about—small group discussions and class time for reflective writing to which the professor can respond-- are but two such techniques. Had he given an invitation for students to disagree and encouraged a plurality of views-- whether by encouraging her to write up her criticisms of Austen or actively creating a safer context for her to share her views with other students-- the resulting critical discussions might have revealed to the professor an unexpected intellect that would respond to mentoring. And whether they accept it or not, the other students in the class would have been exposed to another's way

of looking at the world. But the opportunity for transformation was missed. Indeed, these are just the types of exchanges that Rose describes in his work at the college level and that he finds necessary for others to employ. He explains:

> We need an orientation to instruction that provides guidance on how to determine and honor the beliefs and stories, enthusiasms, and apprehensions that students reveal. How to build on them, and when they clash with our curriculum…how to encourage a discussion that will lead to reflection on what students bring and what they're currently confronting.[4]

For example, when studying poetry in a distance education classroom, Rose would select and send poems to the students in preparation for each class session. When two students sent sentimental, rhyming poems for him to pass along to the others, his first inclination was to find an approach for offering his criticism of their selections. But then he writes

> …it hit me…they wanted to participate in some fuller way. I didn't need to be the critic. There are times when it's better to let all that schooling slide. So I simply Xeroxed their poems and sent them to everybody along with my own selections. What followed was a nice surprise. The participants ended up liking both, but for different reasons….And that opened the door for us to not only share the associations and memories the poems evoked, but to talk a little about technique as well.[5]

Rose disrupted the rule-oriented academic rigidity of his discipline with his flexibility, bringing a new possibility to this class. He valued the exchange with his students more than the academic criteria for selecting poetry to study. Rather than critique their poetry choices, he brought the class into a broader conversation, one that still included an academic discussion of technique. He did not abandon his pedagogic goal, but allowed it to shift with the students' contributions and needs. Rose constantly sought to listen well, so he could hear the mystery of the student in front of him. "The more skilled the tutors [and Rose himself] got at listening and waiting, the better they got at catching the clue

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[4] Rose, *Lives on the Boundary : A Moving Account of the Struggles and Achievements of America's Educationally Underprepared*, 236.
[5] Ibid., 163.

that would reveal … the intelligence of the student's mistake."[6] If we take our mentorship cues from Rose, we learn to watch and listen, to pay attention to our students, to open to their mystery and intelligence. More than we realize can be at stake in each interaction.

> How much we don't see when we look only for deficiency, when we tally up all that people can't do. Many of the students in this book display the gradual or abrupt emergence of an intellectual acuity or literate capacity that just wasn't thought to be there…. But…if you set up the right conditions, try as best you can to cross class and cultural boundaries, figure out what's needed to encourage performance, … if you watch and listen, again and again there will emerge evidence of ability that escapes those who dwell on difference.[7]

When professors and mentors act as gatekeepers who merely transmit the received wisdom and standards of their disciplines, they "dwell on the difference," passing judgment when students do not perform according to academic rules or if they transgress academic norms. But if they focus on mystery, remaining open and responsive, the possibility exists to bring new energy and ideas into our midst. For Rose, the goal is no longer merely "the preservation of a discipline, [but] the intellectual development of young people."[8] I would add that there is an even bigger goal in keeping with the aims of higher education: the encouragement of free and open academic inquiry. Mentorship is more than assisting a student to assimilate into our discipline; if we are to encourage the disruption that can lead to new growth, sometimes it is necessary to suspend our academic worldview and expectations, and to entertain a new perspective.

Consider several stories of underrepresented students in the academy. In

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[6] Ibid., 171.
[7] Ibid., 222.
[8] Ibid., 196.

Solórzano's study of Ford Foundation Fellows, two women graduate students of color describe their intellectual tug-of-war with advisors.

> When I decided to work in the area of Women of Color and Sociology, the demeanor of the professors in my department changed. They asked me why I wanted to work in such a "narrow" area of sociology. I knew that other white students were working in equally "narrow" topics. But a "narrow" topic of race and gender was not supported. This lack of support from my department was difficult to overcome, and I still feel the effects.[9]

Similarly, another woman reported

> …my adviser telling me to justify my wanting to look at Chicanos exclusively. He kept pushing me to include a white comparison group. When I suggested as a compromise a Black comparison group he said, "What good would that do?" I went out and gathered up all the research I could find where a White samples was studied without a minority comparison group. I then told him "How should we justify these studies? These are classic studies in the field." He became really annoyed with me. We finally came to some agreement, but I've always felt that he never really viewed my work as significant as some of my other graduate colleagues in the department who worked on questions where Whites were the sole group or where minority group studies had a White comparison sample.[10]

These two women were actively discouraged from pursuing lines of inquiry that would bring new perspectives to their chosen fields. But obstacles can appear in other guises. After sharing concerns about her institution's academic and social climates with her Associate Dean, an African American graduate student at a predominantly white university was invited to participate in a study about improving the recruitment of, and services to, underrepresented students. She writes,

> When I found out I would be working with the [dean's] research assistant, I was not alarmed until I discovered she was White. Why was I not given a minority graduate assistant with whom to work? Was the [dean] trying to legitimize the study by including her assistant? Perhaps [she] thought I

[9] Solórzano, *Critical Race Theory, Race and Gender Microaggressions, and the Experience of Chicana and Chicano Scholars*, 130.
[10] Ibid.

> could not be objective or that others might question the validity of the study if only minority students were involved in the research.[11]

This student was already unhappy enough that she had more than once considered withdrawing from graduate school or changing departments. To be unsure of the dean's respect for her academic abilities could only have added to her sense of isolation.

Neither can ignorance and bewilderment in the face of a protégé's ideas be overlooked; these, too, can dissuade a student from continuing an academic trajectory. Gregory Cajete, now a respected and influential scholar of native science and education who has served as the principal investigator of research funded by the National Science Foundation and U.S. Department of Agriculture, describes in an interview with Mary Annette Pember how his advisor could not even understand what he hoped to accomplish in his thesis. Cajete earned his master's in adult and secondary education at the University of New Mexico –where he now teaches— and he wished to pursue his PhD there as well. This was not to be.

> In that meeting long ago, as he explained the subject of his thesis —science from a Native American perspective —it was clear that his professor had no idea what he was talking about. "Culturally based science, with its emphasis on health and wellness, was so far off the radar in the academy at that time that the professor suggested I take my proposal to the physical education department," Cajete says with a chuckle as he recalls the discussion.[12]

He finally received his doctorate after being recruited to a program at International College, Los Angeles, graduating from its New Philosophy Program in Social Science Education.[13] Pember also writes:

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[11] Christine Robinson, "Developing a Mentoring Program: A Graduate Student's Reflection of Change," *Peabody Journal of Higher Education* 74, no. 2 (1999), (accessed 4/15/2009), 122.
[12] Mary Annette Pember, "Getting to Know: Dr. Gregory Cajete," *Diverse Issues in Higher Education,* October 16, 2008, 6 (accessed 10/1/2010).
[13] Ibid.

> He credits his self-described dedication to honoring the foundations of indigenous knowledge in education as the basis for his success. Born and raised in the Santa Clara Pueblo in northern New Mexico, he attributes this dedication and persistence to his family's traditional Pueblo values and culture. These values sustained him when he experienced frustration with an often dismissive academy as he chose to pursue the then-unknown area of native science.
>
> Fortunately, Cajete recalls, his work was so far out of the box that he had no illusions of mainstream conformity and success. The simple knowledge and belief that he had something important to share motivated him to gain the skills to articulate this knowledge. "When you're ahead of your time, you have to create your own path," he observes.[14]

Imagine the intellectual loss to the fields of science and science education had he not persevered, had Cajete been dispirited enough to leave higher education, as happens all too often when students are confronted with situations like these. Then imagine a mentor who maintains the openness, curiosity, and responsiveness of Mike Rose, and consider how much the academy might benefit from his ability to encourage and engage with his protégés' unexpected ideas. If his advisor had been willing to concede ignorance and ask more questions, to be confronted with new ideas, Cajete's ideas on traditional knowledge and science education might have received a wider audience years earlier.

In the course of his work on mentoring underrepresented students, Thomas Windham[15] interviewed Indian undergraduates who participated in a mentored summer research internship in atmospheric science, a program very similar to McNair in structure and intent. One student was introduced by his summer mentor to a holistic understanding of science that allowed him to feel comfortable pursuing graduate education in environmental science. He explained,

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Thomas Windham, "Mentoring: Contemporary Uses of a Timeless Resources," *Winds of Change: A Magazine for American Indians in Science and Technology. (*1999).

> "My view of science was threatening to my identity as Diné. I didn't want to enter a profession where life is understood and acted on with reductionist insistence and traditional knowledge is treated as a myth."… However, his summer research mentor reached out to him, introducing him to holistic theories in global science. "Holistic scientific theories," [he] states, "describe the earth as a self-regulating system. They share many similarities with American Indian traditional knowledge, beliefs and practices. 'Good' science does not displace traditional knowledge."[16]

This student needed a theoretical bridge in order to feel at ease in both worlds, and his mentor was able to provide it; he went on to earn a master's degree in soil, water and environmental science from the University of Arizona. As a graduate student, he would have brought a unique perspective to his professors and fellow students, broadening their outlook. We can imagine the deeply responsive attitude his summer research mentor must have embodied in order to help this student reach the decision to become a scientist. The mentor's quality of discernment, of looking deeply at the other person, must have been finely tuned. He must have listened with openness and respect in order to better understand the young man's worldview; this allowed the mentor to reexamine his scientific principles, to lay his own worldview open to critique and the possibility of change. In so doing, he found points of connection with the student. The relationship to the student took precedence over his field-specific training, and he was able to encourage the student to choose graduate school. The protégé decided to follow an academic trajectory that developed his gifts, and –importantly-- they are unique gifts that he can use on behalf of his people which may otherwise have lain dormant.

As McNair director, I have encountered mentors who engage with their students' ideas, and who encourage them to push their disciplines' traditional limits in a similar fashion. Examples have included psychological studies of discrimination based on class,

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[16] Ibid., 19.

disability, or ethnicity, and applied philosophical studies of unequal funding in capital court cases or the appropriate response to extreme poverty. Each of these mentors was responsive to their protégé's worldview and the academic questions that arose from its intersection with their discipline. Like Rose with the poetry lesson, each found it necessary at times to overlook the accepted boundaries of their disciplines. For example, in psychology researchers are discouraged from bringing themselves into their work in any way: it is seen as a potential source of bias that needs to be rooted out. Yet, realizing that it was the source of her passion for the discipline, one psychology mentor worked with a protégé whose research was informed and driven by her outsider status. The mentor assisted the student to learn the protocols of her chosen field, but allowed her to have an emotional connection to the questions she asked. Further, in the graduate study of psychology, there is a strong tradition of not developing personal relationships with your advisees: maintaining boundaries is considered of great importance, and to do otherwise is inappropriate. The mentor also violated these norms, reaching out to the student on a personal level; she allowed an emotional and social bond to form, just as Rose's professors did with him. In this situation, only occasional adjustments were needed in the day-to-day work of the relationship, but these arose out of a more deeply seated, consistently responsive orientation toward the protégé.

Responsive mentorship opens, rather than forecloses, the possibilities available to the student. This might seem to go without saying—of course a mentor's intent is to open new academic pathways to the student. But if she doesn't actively cultivate interpersonal responsiveness and academic flexibility, she risks losing the rich possibilities the student might bring to the academy, just as Cajete's first graduate advisor lost him as a doctoral

student. Although it is possible to usher outsiders into the academic community, doing so is not without cost, and it is not easily done. Students and mentors alike put themselves at risk when they step outside the boundaries circumscribed by their disciplines and their institutions. Lingis[17] would tell us that they are disrupting the rational community, a community with which every academic is familiar.

The Rational Community

Lingis opens his book *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common* by noting that "[c]ommunity is usually conceived as constituted by a number of individuals having something in common—a common language, a common conceptual framework—and building something in common: a nation, a polis, an institution."[18] The rational community is his term for the community formed by a common discourse. I wish to be clear that in this context, "rational" is not implied in the common understanding of the word. The rational community –and there are actually many rational communities—is a closed system. Because of its self-insulating nature, it can end only in reproducing itself. A rational community separates the world into us and them: those who do not accept, or who fall outside of its discourse in any way, are outsiders. Those who are "inside" cannot easily see that their community excludes and leaves many others on the "outside." They are not aware of how their norms are not universal, not independent of culture. It is a very strong community that closely aligns with our idea of the academic community: there are discursive rules that govern who is taken seriously, who is listened to, and those who are within the community often have difficulty seeing how it excludes

[17] Alphonso Lingis, *The Community of those Who have Nothing in Common* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
[18] Ibid., ix.

many people. Indeed, Lingis' description of membership in the rational community brings to mind the Eurocentric scientist who believes in his rationality and objectivity. His individual insights

> … are formulated in universal categories, such that they are detached from the here-now index of the one who first formulated them. Discourse sets out to supply a reason,… an empirical law or a practical maxim, from which the observations and practices could be deduced. Establishing the empirical laws and practical principles distributes the insights of individuals to all. And then one sets out to supply a reason for the reason—the theory from which the laws and the principle from which the maxims could be deduced. ... The common discourse is not simply an accumulation of information and beliefs and maxims, but a rational system in which, ideally, everything that is said implicates the laws and theories of rational discourse. Then, when any rational agent speaks, he speaks as a representative of the common discourse.[19]

In the rational community of our academic disciplines, we utter words that can be spoken by any other interchangeable representative of its discourse. Lingis gives the examples of doctors and veterinarians whom we expect to speak "according to the rules…of the rational discourse of the community of which they are representatives."[20] The corollary to this is that the validity of an outsider's observation is contested because it does not arise from within the system of rational discourse. Certainly, the women graduate students who wanted to pursue sociological studies of Chicanas came face-to-face with the rational discourse of mainstream academic sociology. Their professors responded negatively when they asked to violate their discipline's rational community by pursuing a line of inquiry informed by their outsider status. And the professors themselves acted as would any member of their particular rational community, firmly emphasizing its boundaries and the discourses that it finds acceptable and worthy of study. Mentors from

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[19] Ibid., 109-110.
[20] Gert Biesta, "The Community of those Who have Nothing in Common: Education and the Language of Responsibility," *Interchange* 35, no. 3 (2004), 311.

the rational community who do not question the ways in which their "rational" knowledge is situated in their ethnicity, gender, or class backgrounds will have similar troubled relationships with outsider protégés who wish to bring new perspectives to their work.

I agree with Biesta[21] that rational communities serve an important purpose. The knowledge they create can be vital to our well-being and future scientific or artistic discoveries: where would we be, for instance, without the rational community of medicine? But there is a dark side. Ever so carefully, the academic rational community has built its discourses over time for their "consistency and coherence"; in so doing, it has created in-groups and out-groups. Even in medicine, we can see this phenomenon at work. Until relatively recently, most medical studies looked at the health of white middle class men; that women or men of color might have different symptoms, rates of illness, or responses to medications was not even considered. (For example, heart attacks often present differently for women than they do for men, and black men have far higher rates of hypertension than white men.) But in more subtle ways, too, outsiders' knowledge is marginalized and dismissed, and the possibilities available to them are foreclosed upon. To use the apt description of Dolores Delgado Bernal and Octavio Villalpando,[22] the academy, on the whole, creates and reinscribes an "apartheid of knowledge" with its systems of rational discourse. They describe this phenomenon as

> the separation of knowledges that occur in the American higher education context. [The separation is] … sustained by an epistemological racism that limits the range of possible epistemologies considered legitimate….Too frequently, an epistemology based on the social history and culture of the

[21] Ibid.
[22] Dolores Delgado Bernal and Octavio Villalpando, "An Apartheid of Knowledge in the Academy: The Struggle Over "Legitimate" Knowledge for Faculty of Color," *Equity and Excellence in Education* 35, no. 2 (2002).

> dominant race has produced scholarship which portrays people of color as deficient and judges the scholarship produced by scholars of color as biased and nonrigorous.[23]

The academy is a manifestation of Lingis' rational community, and the physical, social, and intellectual exclusions described in Chapter I have resulted in a system of higher education

> founded on a Eurocentric epistemological perspective based on white privilege and 'American democratic' ideas of meritocracy, objectivity, and individuality. This epistemological perspective presumes that there is only one way of knowing and understanding the world, and it is the natural way of interpreting truth, knowledge, and reality. [24]

The epistemological biases of the academy draw clear boundaries between those who are inside and those who are outside its rational community, and when underrepresented students enter the university, they face discursive and epistemological challenges.

For some mentors, it might be unsettling to consider that ways of knowing can be intertwined with race and ethnicity, and the veracity of my claim might be doubted because it destabilizes a great deal of our commonly-accepted knowledge. Delgado Bernal and Villalpando, along with many other scholars who document the experiences of underrepresented students in the academy, use Critical Race Theory (CRT) as an analytical tool to unravel the discursive web that sometimes traps McNair mentors and staff. Solórzano writes that "critical race theory in education challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism as they relate to education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups."[25] Rather than considering racism something that manifests through individual action, CRT

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[23] Ibid., 169.
[24] Ibid., 171.
[25] Solórzano, *Critical Race Theory, Race and Gender Microaggressions, and the Experience of Chicana and Chicano Scholars*, 122.

reveals its systemic nature, and it is in this sense that I use the word. The themes of CRT have been threaded through this study: the centrality of race and racism in our system of higher education; a challenge to the dominant ideology; a commitment to social justice; the centrality (and validity) of students' experiential knowledge; and an interdisciplinary perspective.[26] CRT provides, as Solórzano explains, "a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the subordination of scholars of color."[27] Using the experiences of students and scholars of color as a guide to transform the dominant discourses, CRT challenges the Eurocentrism of the academic rational community. And although first-generation students are not necessarily students of color, if we let their experiences guide our analysis of the academy, we find similar patterns of exclusion: a "critical first-generation" perspective could easily follow the path forged by CRT theorists.

Mentors who challenge their own perspectives by reading research performed through a CRT lens, or by reading narratives such as those written by Rose and Lubrano, attune themselves to truly hearing their students' perceptions of and experiences in the academy. These works expose and highlight relations of control that are stable over time, the by-product of the rational community's creation of in-groups and out-groups. We better comprehend structures, and systems that limit our students as well as texts and curricula that silence them; we gain insight into the accumulated weight of microaggressions they may have encountered throughout their education. Armed with this knowledge, we are less likely to brush off any particular troubling event as

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 123.

inconsequential, a one-time aberration within a putatively supportive system. As just one example of the potential collisions between ethnicity and epistemology, recall the Diné student who nearly abandoned his scientific path. His ethnically and culturally specific approach to knowledge was not accepted in mainstream science: he belonged to the out-group created by the rational community he encountered in his university's science curriculum. Very likely, he had experienced several years of silencing academic microaggressions in the form of dominant scientific thought which was dismissive of his background. Mentors who try to see such experiences through a CRT lens are in a better position to recognize when their protégés are confronting such barriers; to the best of their abilities, they can assist students to overcome them.

What type of mentorship will best serve the student who has come from outside the common discourse of the Eurocentric higher education system, from outside the discourse of an intellectual history built upon racial and class-based exclusions that delegitimize the knowledge she brings with her and the approach she takes to answer her research questions? Is our intent merely to bring her into the fold? If that were the only purpose of mentoring, it could be achieved with Johnson's traditional, grooming mentorship: his rules reinforce the technologies and discourses that the rational community both creates and is sustained by. This is precisely what happened to the Chicana graduate students who wished to pursue research questions that arose from their status as outsiders. Their advisors would have preferred to exclude their knowledge, would have preferred them to be more "objective"—that is, less connected to their work, an outcome that would not be surprising to a mentor who took the time to study CRT. These advisors were not mentors: they attempted to silence the women, to control their

scholarship so that it would conform to the accepted norms and common work of the rational community of sociologists. As Lingis notes, "The community that produces something in common, that establishes truth and now establishes a technological universe of simulacra, excludes the [other]—excludes their utterances and their bodies."[28] Mentoring within the rational community requires mentors to act as representatives of their disciplines and to employ the techniques that Johnson elaborates so thoroughly. It places us in the position of speaking only as representatives of a community that has excluded our students. The mentor's purpose is narrow: academic "success" according to existing disciplinary rules and norms. Further, mentoring within the rational community asks only that protégés acquire the knowledge, skills, and norms their mentor transmits to them.

Rational mentoring ignores the knowledge the students bring with them; it dismisses their ways of knowing and their unique contributions. Additionally, rational mentorship requires an outsider to leave a large part of herself at the door before she enters the academic house, because "…in the measure that statements are established as true, [every discourse] designates outsiders as not making sense, as mystified, mad, or brutish, and it delivers them over to violence."[29] If the protégé insists upon bringing her outsider status and knowledge into the rational community, she risks harm such as that experienced by the Ford Foundation fellows. They were subjected to social and academic violence, and years later were still feeling the effects. Even Cajete was perceived as "not making sense" by his advisor, and it was a long time before he returned to the university to earn his doctorate. The professors who worked with Cajete and the Chicana graduate

[28] Lingis, *The Community of Those Who have Nothing in Common*, 13.
[29] Ibid., 135.

students took no risks. They were untouched by their students' ideas and intellectual struggles, and they did not respond with any measure of openness— thus, their advising could only result in the academy being reproduced ad infinitum. For underrepresented McNair students, the "opportunity" to join a rational community that has excluded them and delegitimized their knowledge is a paltry offering if they are not also presented with the opportunity to transform the academy itself. Neither is the academy served by rejecting their contested knowledge, for they would bring insights from beyond the closely guarded boundaries of the rational community. However, if we aim to bring new possibilities to the academy, and if we want more for our students than mere assimilation into the higher socioeconomic status promised by our opportunity program, then the rational community of the academy must somehow be disrupted. Taking the risk to truly respond to our students, we may be rewarded by richer relationships with them. In the risky space of responsiveness, we might disrupt the rational community, and enter the community of strangers.

The Community of Strangers

Within and underneath the rational community, there exists the possibility for a second community in which we recognize that we are mysteries to one another. To put it another way, the members of this community are all strangers.[30] Who, then, inhabits the community of strangers? Who is a member of this version of community that is not founded on common goals, language, or heritage? Our usual notion of community is inhabited by individual, autonomous, rational sovereign subjects—a philosophical legacy of the Enlightenment. And these Enlightenment notions of the rational, sovereign subject

[30] Gert Biesta, *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006).

permeate modern education, which concerns itself with the development of subjectivity and agency through education.[31] This subject already exists independently of others; its essence merely waits to be revealed or to reach its potential. It is precisely this sovereign subject who is a member of the rational community. The traditional, rational mentor who sees mentorship as a way of grooming a student -- helping her reach her full potential within her discipline's rational community-- is subscribing to this idea of subjectivity. Johnson's colorblind relationship toward the individual student is also founded upon this concept of the rational subject. But there is another way to relate to students, founded upon an alternative view of subjectivity, one that arises in the event of relating to the other.

The writings of Emmanuel Lévinas are essential to understanding a community of strangers based upon otherness, mystery, and alterity; his work requires a bit more explication to help draw this community's contours. Central to Lévinas' oeuvre is the metaphor of the face: "…the face is a meaning all by itself. You are you."[32] When we are in the presence of the face, we are called into relationship with and become responsible to the other. And yet, "the Other remains infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign; his face in which his epiphany is produced and which appeals to me breaks with the world that can be common to us…."[33] It is the very otherness – the strangeness—of the other that calls us to relationship. Lévinas would say that the relationship must be ethical, because the unknowable, unique other also calls us to responsibility. This is not responsibility in the common, modernist sense of an object that we can choose to take up or to shirk; such

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[31] Ibid.
[32] Emmanuel Lévinas and Philippe Nemo, *Ethics and Infinity* [Ethique et infini.], 1st ed. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 86.
[33] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity; an Essay on Exteriority* [Totalité et infini.], Vol. 24 (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

an understanding would "assume that we are subjects, autonomous, sovereign subjects, before we become responsible."[34] Lévinasian responsibility is not a choice; rather, it precedes us, and is our own path to becoming subjects, to the constitution of our own unique, singular being. Lévinas turns Enlightenment understandings of subjectivity upside down: ethics precedes any knowledge we can have of the other.

The Lévinasian subject is constituted through its responsible response to the other; it does not exist prior to this event. Subjecthood is thus borne out of relationship; it comes forth in and through the moment of relating. Borrowing from Jean Luc Nancy, Biesta calls this event the *coming into presence* of the subject.[35] It is a unique and singular event. Further, "[t]to come into presence – and this is a crucial step in [his] argument—thus implies coming into a world populated by [others], a world of plurality and difference….Coming into presence is, therefore, a presentation to others who are not like us."[36] In the most profound way, we need others to come into presence, to be recognized in this new understanding of subjectivity. The Lévinasian subject is also unique because its response to the other is irreplaceable. It is a form of subjectivity that aligns with the community of strangers for just this reason: to come into presence demands my unique response. In the rational community my response can be given by any other member of the rational community; we are interchangeable.

It is in this sense of uniqueness that I use the words *other* and *stranger*, but they also carry with them connotations of Zygmunt Bauman's definition of the stranger as one who does not "fit the cognitive, moral, or aesthetic map of the world."[37] Protégés from

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[34] Biesta, *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future*, 148.
[35] Ibid., 43.
[36] Ibid., 49.
[37] Ibid., 58.

outside the rational community of the academy would certainly fit Bauman's definition if seen from a position within it, and first-generation and students of color often feel they do not fit in the academy, that is, that they are being viewed as strangers according to Bauman's meaning. If mentors wish to disrupt the rational community, an egalitarian stance is required: they must recognize that they, too, are strangers to their students. Differences of ethnicity and first-generation status contribute to mystery, and maintaining an openness to students' experiences as one element of their alterity will prepare us to disrupt the rational community. Accepting that we are mysteries to one another (whether or not the other recognizes and acts upon this fact), we may seek access to the community of strangers. Lingis also refers to it as the community of those who have nothing in common or the *other* community. It is here that the rational community can be disrupted, here that we meet our students in exchanges that require us to use our own unique voice so that we might respond to them outside the strictures of our academic discourses.

Lingis tells us the other community is a "shadow" community, the "double" of the rational community. It is always present as a possibility, waiting for the rational community to be disrupted so that it can come into being.

> This *other community* forms not in a work, but in the interruption of work and enterprises. It is not realized in having or in producing something in common but in exposing oneself to the one with whom one has nothing in common…. The other community forms when one recognizes, in the face of the other, an imperative. An imperative that not only contests the common discourse and community from which he or she is excluded, but everything one has or sets out to build in common with him or her.[38]

[38] Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*, 10.

When we recognize and respond to the imperative of a protégé, we disrupt the rational community and we accept a Lévinasian subjectivity based upon responsibility to the other. Biesta writes:

> It is in and through the ways in which we respond to the other, to the otherness of the other, to what is strange and different to us—and to respond means to be responsive and take responsibility—that we come into the world as unique, singular beings.[39]

Our own ability to become singular beings depends upon whether or not we choose to enter the community of strangers, otherwise we remain interchangeable subjects of the rational community. This is not to say that the rational community can be completely eschewed. It is not as if there are

> …two options we can choose from. There is no way to deny the importance of the rational community – or rational communit*ies*-- since they make certain ways of speaking and doing possible…. [However] the other community [of strangers] forms, comes into presence, in the interruption of the work and enterprises of the rational community….It lives 'inside' the rational community as a constant possibility and comes into presence as soon as one responds to the other, to the otherness of the other, to what is strange in relation to the discourse and logic of the rational community.[40]

Here then, is a way to grapple with the difficult terrain of McNair mentoring. Mentorship across difference strives to hold students' otherness and mystery in the foreground so that we might recognize the imperative to respond to them; only then can we enter the community of strangers. By disrupting the rational community, we each come into presence as unique, singular beings. Yet, in McNair, we follow and explicitly teach the prescriptions and dominant discourses of the rational community. Perhaps we can imagine mentoring outsiders as an attempt to allow the community of strangers to

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[39] Biesta, *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future*, 69.
[40] Ibid., 66.

interrupt –and eventually reconstitute-- the rational community within which it is embedded.

It is possible to accomplish just this. Rose recognized the imperative he was presented by his poetry students, and he entered the community of strangers by doing what Lingis says is required, exposing himself to the other, to the outsider. In contrast to Cajete's advisor and the Chicanas' professors, Rose questioned his own approach to teaching; he opened his eyes to new perspectives and his ears to new voices. But Rose went farther still: he nurtured the other community, the community of strangers, by listening. He listened to his students' words, to their actions, to the context of their lives. And then he took the risk of responding to them, opening himself and his curriculum to what he learned by listening. Rose learned *from* his students, not *about* them.[41] They were far more to him than objects of knowledge, and he was changed by his relationships with them. This is the promise of mentorship in the other community, the community of strangers— students receive respect and support for their ideas to blossom, mentors are personally and professionally challenged and renewed, and the academy opens space for those it has previously excluded.

Call and Response: Listening for the Community of Strangers

Mentors who accept the "elected obligation"[42] to respond to the imperative presented by their students must first learn to listen, and I consider listening an ability to "receive a world we cannot share."[43] No matter how close our own background might be

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[41] Sharon Todd, *Learning from the Other: Levinas, Psychoanalysis, and Ethical Possibilities in Education* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).
[42] Clarence W. Joldersma, "Pedagogy of the Other: A Levinasian Approach to the Teacher-Student Relationship," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2001).
[43] Todd, *Learning from the Other: Levinas, Psychoanalysis, and Ethical Possibilities in Education*, 128.

to our protégé's, there are always aspects of a student's world we do not, and cannot, know. We may feel a great kinship with her, but difference is always present, whether we attend to it or not. In listening, we "attend to the Other, or, more appropriately, the otherness of the Other"[44] and allow her embodied, situated presence to speak. In attending and listening, we learn from the other --the stranger, the outsider-- rather than about her. We hold ourselves open to her otherness, her alterity, and allow ourselves to be changed: "it is not so much that the listener is selfless, but that the listener's response, her attentiveness, must incorporate the conditions of her own self-questioning."[45] The dual quality of listening to otherness bears emphasis: listening requires an "inquiry stance"[46] toward our students, but it is also reflexive because we question our own social and academic positions. Doing so prepares a mentor to listen, but the self-reflection that allows for truly hearing is not a straightforward task.

Listening across difference requires a disposition toward dislodging comfortable assumptions and attitudes; a mentor must become a "self-conscious practitioner of her culture and a self-conscious and critical member"[47] of her academic community. Affirming our privileges and acknowledging the structures and discourses that underrepresented students push against is but a start; it is also necessary to admit the limits of our understanding. Deborah Kerdeman asks us to prepare for the occasions on which we will be "pulled up short."[48] She describes this as "a particular experience of

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[44] Ibid., 130.
[45] Ibid., 132.
[46] Katherine Schultz, *Listening: A Framework for Teaching Across Differences* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2003).
[47] Lugones, *Hablando Cara a Cara/Speaking Face to Face: An Exploration of Ethnocentric Racism*, 48.
[48] Deborah Kerdeman, "Pulled Up Short: Challenges for Education," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2003).

disorientation"[49] in which we are "caught off-guard."[50] We have seen that this happens frequently to underrepresented and first-generation students who enter the academy: their everyday understandings and lived experiences are constantly challenged. Mentors who wish to enter the community of strangers will need to allow for the possibility that they, too, may experience disorientation if they are truly open to protégés' experiences and scholarly interests. Being pulled up short challenges a mentor's sense of academic "…'know-how' and its accompanying sense of security and control. Being pulled up short discloses attitudes, qualities, and behaviors we would prefer to disown, deny, or recognize only insofar as we project them onto others…."[51] Mentors with a disposition to being pulled up short do not arrogantly rush to academic judgment when presented with ideas that come from outside their rational community. Rather, they will learn to identify and accept the confusion and uncertainty they might feel, remaining open to the cultural and academic worlds that underrepresented students reveal to them, worlds that "we cannot fathom on our own."[52] Rose was able to do this, as was the Diné student's mentor. Both were self-conscious practitioners in their academic communities, and both had the humility to accept the limits of their disciplinary knowledge. When they were pulled up short by their students, they reflected on the meaning of those moments and maintained an open, responsive attitude. They both sought more equitable, reciprocal relationships with students; although they were surely aware of the inherent imbalance of power in the teaching relationship, they worked against it by allowing their students to change them. Academically, they did not cleave to their disciplinary expectations, but

[49] Ibid., 208.
[50] Ibid., 209.
[51] Ibid., 210.
[52] Ibid., 213.

followed their students into new paths of inquiry, even while they still taught the planned and accepted curriculum.

Lisa Delpit gives mentors another way to conceive of the disposition to being pulled up short. For her, communicating across differences

> …takes a very special kind of listening, listening that requires not only open eyes and ears, but hearts and minds. We do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs. To put our beliefs on hold is to cease to exist as ourselves for a moment—and that is not easy. It is painful as well, because it means turning yourself inside out, giving up your own sense of who you are, and being willing to see yourself in the unflattering light of another's angry gaze. It is not easy, but it is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue.[53]

She encourages educators to become vulnerable, "to allow the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness."[54] When mentors cannot do this, they perpetuate the arrogance of the academy. Consider a story Delpit relates in which a black school principal discusses her experiences in a doctoral program. The classroom discussion turns toward the education of black children.

> If you try to suggest that's not quite the way it is, [the white professor and students] get defensive, then you get defensive, then they they'll start reciting research.
>
> I try to give them my experiences, to explain. They just look and nod. The more I try to explain, they just look and nod, just keep looking and nodding. *They don't really hear me* [emphasis added].
>
> Then, when it's time for class to be over, the professor tells me to come to his office to talk more. So I go. He asks for more examples of what I'm talking about, and he looks and nods while I give them. Then he says that that's just *my* experience. It doesn't really apply to most black people.
>
> It becomes futile because *they think they know everything about everybody* [emphasis added]. What you have to say about your life, your children, doesn't mean anything. They don't really want to hear what you

[53] Lisa D. Delpit, *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*, 2006 ed. (New York: New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton & Co., 2006).
[54] Ibid., 47.

> have to say. They wear blinders and earplugs. They only want to go on research they've read that other white people have written.[55]

This professor-- and the entire class of graduate students—were not willing to be pulled up short by experiences they did not share. The arrogance of the academy is perpetuated in their attitude toward the black principal and their reliance upon research by "other white people." They are unchanged by their encounter with difference; they close ranks against the outsider to their rational community. And she gives up trying to make any inroads because no one will listen. The result? A class and a doctoral program lose the valuable contributions she might have made.

Certainly we need to listen to the student before us. We need to pay attention to her; tellingly, the word "attention" comes from the Latin *tendere,* "to stretch toward." The attentive listening that Todd and Delpit describe is indeed an act of stretching toward our students. But it is equally vital to listen to the broader context of their lives, as well as the classroom or mentoring context. Katherine Schultz writes on this matter, urging us to listen for silence and silencing, what Delpit would call the "silenced dialogue"[56] and Maria Lugones would call "mutings."[57] If a mentor hopes to disrupt the rational community and enter the community of strangers with her protégé, listening for silence is an important skill to cultivate. It can reveal the control the rational community exerts on our academic expectations, our perceptions, and our relationships with students.

> Listening for silence and acts of silencing is a critical and often overlooked aspect of teaching. Listening for silence includes listening for missing conversations and overlooked perspectives, and also listening for the moments when students are actively silenced by individuals and institutions…[L]istening for silencing includes listening for divergent

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[55] Ibid., 22.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Lugones, *Hablando Cara a Cara/Speaking Face to Face: An Exploration of Ethnocentric Racism,* 49.

> perspectives and the moments when individuals have been shut out of the conversation.[58]

The Chicana graduate students had professors who chose not to listen for silence and silencing. They did not recognize the women's "overlooked perspectives" as a form of institutional silencing, endorsed by the academic rational community. Neither did they question their own complicity with this silencing; rather, they worked to perpetuate it.

As Audrey Thompson points out, "Listening across difference requires attending to issues that may be unfamiliar or disquieting."[59] The willingness to be pulled up short by our own complicity in the academic culture of power can make it hard for even well-intentioned mentors to listen for silence—for instance, the mentor in the natural sciences who cannot comprehend why an underrepresented first-generation student lacks confidence in her abilities and therefore is less inclined to project a sense of scientific professionalism. The inherent arrogance of the academy inhibits being able to see and understand why this might be hard for her. This is precisely the same dynamic that occurred to the principal in Delpit's graduate school vignette. Neither the professor nor the other students can face the disquieting issues she introduces to the classroom; instead they turn to the culture of academic power—the research of other white educators—to shore up the status quo. They become the mechanism of institutional silencing. In contrast, responsive mentorship begins with an inquiry stance and this means we also listen for silence. It includes listening to the context of a physics student's life, and the effect this has on her in the classroom; it includes "noticing when students take critical or

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[58] Schultz, *Listening: A Framework for Teaching Across Differences*, 109.
[59] Audrey Thompson, "Schooling Race Talk," *Educational Researcher* 34, no. 6 (August/ September 2005, 2005), 25.

risky stands and supporting them to articulate these positions."[60] Missed opportunities abound in the classroom and in mentoring relationships— consider again Cajete's first thesis discussion, or the woman who silently left college when she concluded that literature is a middle class endeavor. Schultz tells us that "[teachers] can listen for the internal dynamics of a classroom that might silence students from articulating alternative views that challenge or fall outside of the mainstream."[61] Listening to classroom and interpersonal mentoring dynamics would not have assured different outcomes in these cases, but the possibility for change would have been present.

Listening for silence is a complicated task, but using the CRT literature to better understand the experiences of underrepresented students will alert mentors to relational and classroom situations that might be problematic. It can help identify ways students might present knowledge that would summon an exclusionary or silencing response based upon our discipline's protocols and expectations, rather than a unique and singular response that holds the possibility to call both mentor and protégé "into presence." It can inform our listening so that events and systems that silence and exclude students are more apparent. Although students will remain mysteries, if we prepare ourselves with CRT-based knowledge, we better perceive the barriers and experiences they face. Literature can also offer a way to develop our capacity for deep listening. But as Lugones reminds us,

> Reading [classics of ethnic literature such as *Drylongso* and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*]…is not helpful in exploring racism and ethnocentrism unless these works are read from [an] engaged position. When read from the engaged position, these works can help the White/Angla become self-consciously White/Anglo in the racial and ethnic sense of the words: they can help her unravel the connections

[60] Schultz, *Listening: A Framework for Teaching Across Differences*, 118.
[61] Ibid.

> between racism ethnocentrism, White/Anglo self-esteem, polite arrogance, polite condescension and a troubled sense of responsibility in the face of people of color.[62]

Listening and reading from an engaged position requires the open hearts and minds that Delpit appeals for; it means, too, that we remain aware of our own ethnicity, history, and racialization.[63] We must allow for the possibility that we might be pulled up short; disorientation is necessary if we want to learn something new, something we have not previously fathomed. But if we are able to develop these capacities, we are less likely to respond to students with the obliviousness of a rational mentor who cannot hear them when they bring unfamiliar or unsettling knowledge.

Listening openly and attentively also encourages a way of mentoring that centers on the relationship between mentor and protégé, "Rather than envisioning teaching only as a process of enculturation, we need to view teaching as a reciprocal process in which [mentors'] decisions and...practices are shaped, in part, in response to what they learn from their students." [64] Listening offers the possibility of disrupting the rational community because it discourages rule-oriented traditional approaches to mentorship. In this next passage, Schultz refers to the K-12 curriculum, but her words are applicable to college classrooms and mentoring relationships as well.

> The prescriptive models of teaching that dominate the educational discourse involve enacting a script that is the same regardless of the students' identities, background knowledge, or interests. What is taught – the script—does not change with respect to the context of the learning transaction. In contrast, listening is a stance that actively works against such prescriptive methods, because the underlying assumption is that a teacher cannot possibly know how and what to teach a student until she or he has listened carefully to that student.[65]

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[62] Lugones, *Hablando Cara aCcara/Speaking Face to Face: An Exploration of Ethnocentric Racism,* 51.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Schultz, *Listening: A Framework for Teaching Across Differences*, 78.
[65] Ibid., 80-81.

Taking a listening stance with our students, "implies adapting classroom interactions and curriculum to both solicit and use this knowledge and epistemology."[66] Mentors who truly listen will adjust the academic content of their work accordingly, as Rose did and the Chicanas' advisors did not. They may also find they need to relate to their protégés in unexpected ways. I have known chemistry and biology mentors who listened closely to the context of their students' lives. The protégés were low income, first-generation students who were fascinated by their chosen fields, but had little concept of either how to pursue their interests or how to negotiate the academic and social expectations of college and graduate school. The mentors opened themselves to listen, to grapple with a world they did not know; they let their students' alterity trouble their mentoring. Changed by their relationships, they responded in new ways to their protégés: they looked beyond traditional academic performance measures; they explicitly taught social protocols; and they developed relationships with their protégés outside of the classroom. The students are now in doctoral programs.

The responses will change according to each situation, each relationship, but a mentor who cultivates listening to context and background, listening for silencing and exclusion, interrogates her own rational community. Through study and self-reflection, mentors can attune themselves to the limits the rational academic community places upon both their students and their own thought processes; they prepare to be pulled up short. Listening to silence, silencing, and exclusion is necessary if mentors are to usher outsiders into the academy in the hope of transforming its social and intellectual landscape. Listening to students' experiences and to the context of their lives will help us become aware of the patterns of exclusion that are revealed in stories such as those of the

[66] Ibid., 79.

Chicana scholars or Gregory Cajete. These patterns are both common and predictable. Outsiders entering the academic rational community will most likely experience barriers based upon any of the factors already discussed—class, gender, first-generation status, or race. Any scholar who uses Critical Race Theory, such as UCLA's Daniel Solórzano, will attest to this fact. But we cannot limit our understanding of students, seeing them only as exemplars of CRT-based narratives; the dangers of so doing are twofold. First, we run the risk of once again seeing students only as objects of knowledge-- even if that knowledge provides those of us inside the academy with vital insight into outsiders' experiences. Further, we risk not doing justice to the singularity of each student, for they can only come into presence when we attend to their mystery. Mentors who learn to listen and simultaneously apprehend both the student's alterity and the patterns of exclusion she faces as the member of an out-group are in the best position to respond to their protégé within the community of strangers.

Call and Response: Entering Conversation

Close and attentive listening is the first step we take into the other community, but the other demands a response. And, to disrupt the rational community, the response must show that we have received "what we cannot share," that we recognize and respond to the imperative of the other. Schultz is clear that listening does not imply passivity; its point is not merely to gather knowledge about our students. Rather, active participation in dialogue is required. It is possible to enter into dialogue only after listening, and dialogue is the gateway to the other community, the only place we might speak to the stranger in a meaningful way.

> To enter into conversation with another is to lay down one's arms and one's defenses; to throw open the gates of one's own positions; to expose oneself to the other, the outsider; and to lay oneself open to surprises, contestation, and inculpation. It is to risk what one found or produced in common.[67]

In the academy, we can lay ourselves open to surprises and contestation through conversation with our students; Lingis would tell us these encounters expose us to the other with whom we have nothing in common. In conversation, we might bring the other community into being, even though the context of our work is within the rational community.

There are two ways to begin a conversation according to Lingis. The first belongs to members of the rational community, for in this type of communication we are interchangeable with any other community member. It is the type of conversation a rational mentor might have with a protégé-- one psychology or philosophy professor might be substituted with another from the same field and either would offer similar words. In this form of speech

> …one depersonalizes one's visions and insights, formulates them in the terms of the common rational discourse, and speaks as a representative, a spokesperson, equivalent and interchangeable with others.... The other entry into communication is that in which you find it is you, you saying something, that is essential.[68]

As Biesta describes it:

> …when I speak to the stranger, when I expose myself to the stranger, when I want to speak in the community of those who have nothing in common, then I have to find my own voice, then it is *me* who has to speak – and no one else can do this for me. It is, to put it differently, this very way of speaking that constitutes me as a unique individual, as *me*, and no one else.[69]

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[67] Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*, 87.
[68] Ibid.,116.
[69] Biesta, *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future*, 64.

This is a risky space. First, because we cannot know who it is we are responsible for before we enter the community of strangers and respond to the call of their otherness. Second, because we cannot know how we might be changed in the encounter. When the way is clear, no risk is involved. Biesta explains further by citing Derrida:

> When the path is clear and given, when a certain knowledge opens up the way in advance, the decision is already made, it might as well be said that there is none to make; irresponsibly, and in good conscience, one simply applies or implements a program….It makes of action the applied consequence, the simple application of a knowledge or a know-how. It makes of ethics and politics a technology.[70]

Derrida's insight is easily applied to Johnson's concept of mentorship. In many respects, he reduces mentor-protégé interactions to the "simple application of a knowledge or a know-how." It is a technological, rule-based approach that begins with a preconceived notion of the individual who is being mentored: both who she is now, and who she is to become by being mentored. Johnson assumes he can know the individual he mentors, and so the "path is clear and given": he does not struggle with responding to otherness, he applies techniques and methods. The conversations that form Johnson's mentorship focus on helping a student become a particular picture of the rational subject. His speech cannot respond to the otherness of the outsider. Johnson does not accept the risky responsibility of mentoring the other: "The responsibility of the educator is a responsibility for what is to come, without knowledge of what is to come."[71] The other precedes me; to respond to the other's uniqueness is not an act of recognition that merely brings the other into existence as the object of my subjectivity. I cannot know what is to come, and rules will be little comfort.

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[70] Biesta, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common: Education and the Language of Responsibility*, 318.
[71] Biesta, *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future*, 148.

In risky conversations with protégés, a mentor must give her unique response to the question of the other.

> What is it that we can say when we speak for ourselves, outside of the confines of the rational community? What language can we use? I want to suggest that the language that we use in such encounters should not be understood as language in the sense of a set of words or utterances. What matters is not the content of what we say, but what is *done*. And what is done, what needs to be done, and what only I can do, is to respond to the stranger, to be *responsive* and *responsible* to what the stranger asks from me.[72]

This also means that we need to set aside the voice we use in the rational community and find another. We can begin by asking questions.

> …educators…have a crucial task in…challenging their students to respond … by [following Rancière and] posing such fundamental questions as "What do you think about it?," "Where do you stand?," and "How will you respond?" There is no doubt that these are very difficult questions….[73]

The simplicity of these questions belies the complexity that can be the fruit of an earnest conversation beginning here. I have given examples of advisors and professors who clearly did not care to hear their students' answers to these questions. They did not challenge their own ignorance; they did not listen to receive a world they could not share. But the answers students give are not to be taken as mere intellectual exercises, we must allow our students to touch us, to change us. When Mike Rose taught Shakespeare to his students, he had honest conversations with them about what they thought; he did not get defensive, he did not have an ulterior motive of assimilating them into the rational community of English literature. He let go of his rational voice, laid himself open to contestation, and he responded. I have had the pleasure to know and watch a number of McNair mentors who listen to students across difference and respond to their protégés;

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[72] Ibid., 64.
[73] Ibid., 28.

they are sometimes surprised by what they learn and how their own intellectual worlds expand. I have known mentors who guide protégés through studies grounded in standpoint epistemologies or that use Critical Race Theory to analyze patterns of exclusion in higher education. Although they might begin their mentorship with only an inkling of the barriers their students face, science and humanities mentors alike have reached beyond their own training, working with students whose research questions are informed by their outsider status or their family history. Simultaneously, these mentors support students in learning accepted research protocols and academic social norms so that they can better face the rigor of a life in higher education. If they are to enter the intense world of contested academic spaces, and perhaps work against the grain of commonly held views, they will need to be well prepared. And as they change the academy, it will be reassuring to know there are those who listen, and who are changed by the world they bring.

CHAPTER 4

MENTORING FOR TRANSFORMATION

If, following Biesta, we aim to maintain an open and responsive approach to protégés, listening closely to their words, writings, and the context of their lives is just the beginning. In asking us to reconsider the very nature of our subjectivity by accepting that we depend upon others for our ability to come into presence, Biesta prepares the ground in which meaningful, responsive mentorship might be cultivated. Through responsiveness and responsibility, mentors disrupt the rational community and enter the community of those who have nothing in common-- where they and their protégés will be on more egalitarian terms. Biesta and Lingis offer an extremely helpful ontological and ethical vision that centers on the alterity of the other. They would exhort mentors to remember the mystery of their protégés, and although this is always helpful to bear in mind when working with students, it is not sufficient to guide mentors toward practices that nurture the community of strangers. Biesta recognizes "the world is not a neutral place,"[1] but neither he nor Lingis delves into the effect asymmetrical power relations and a contentious history might have on everyday interactions between mentor and protégé. They do not offer grounded, concrete descriptions of what responsiveness means in a relational context already troubled by histories of exclusion and power differences; many questions remain regarding what, exactly, this might mean in day-to-day relationships

[1] Ibid., 107.

with students. What is more, Biesta's idea of responsiveness seems to place extreme pressure on mentors to remain open to protégés, without giving ample consideration to why this is important, or how it might be sustained.

Mentor and protégé are located in a particular time and place, and the larger context in which they find themselves is the "concrete political situation"[2] of our Eurocentric system of higher education; the many-layered power differential between them is intrinsic to the relationship itself. Mentors act in a world of relational tensions coupled with institutional demands and obstacles, not to mention academic standards to which protégés will be held accountable. Striving for egalitarianism and responsiveness in their interactions, mentors must remain cognizant of the fact that not only does the very context of the mentorship work against them, but they must consciously teach the structures, academic norms, and power dynamics they wish to disrupt. How are mentors to promote egalitarian relationships with students, given the fact that a protégé may enter the relationship with guardedness, already associating the mentor with the exclusionary systems and history of higher education? Recall Lugones' question: "why and to what purpose, to I trust myself to you…?"[3] The student places herself in a vulnerable position when she enters a relationship with a mentor, especially one from a more dominant social group. Even though mentors work within contexts fraught with power imbalances, how might they approach interactions with students in more symmetrical ways that promote exchanges capable of disrupting the hierarchical rational community? More specifically, how do mentors manage to give academic direction to protégés without reinscribing their subordinate status? What does it mean to be responsive, or to create a context in which

[2] Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 109.
[3] Lugones, *Hablando Cara a Cara/Speaking Face to Face: An Exploration of Ethnocentric Racism*, 50.

students will be willing to talk to them? Applying Johnson's mentorship techniques and ethical prescriptions will not move mentors into the community of strangers, but neither does Biesta's philosophical vision offer principles to guide them. I hope to extend his theoretical reach into the political context and pedagogical tasks that face mentors. Mentors may begin by orienting their work around mystery, otherness and alterity; these are vital concepts to hold in mind when trying to sustain openness in work across difference. However, they risk feeling alienated from protégés if these remain the only focus. And, if mystery leads to alienation, responsiveness may seem hopeless.

The task is to articulate recommendations for mentors that are consistent with Biesta's work, everyday guidance attuned to the mystery of the other. I seek an elaboration of Biesta's ideas that will give mentors a powerful reason to sustain their efforts to listen and respond to protégés, as well as offer some indications as to how this might be done. Kelly Oliver's ethical and political vision resonates with Biesta, but also fills in theoretical gaps and indicates a path mentors may follow when they are swimming against the stream of institutional norms and negotiating with students who may not trust them, or the institutions they represent. I have argued that the academy is often a site of social and political violence for students who have been othered by our educational system –in the negative, objectifying sense of the word. Because Oliver is explicitly concerned with opening up the "possibility of a more humane and ethical future beyond violence,"[4] her work on witnessing speaks to the problems that arise as we attempt to mentor across difference and disrupt the rational community of higher education. She strives to create egalitarian, nonviolent relationships within asymmetrical power contexts. In so doing, Oliver enhances and deepens Biesta's thoughts in several significant ways:

[4] Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 18.

she is always aware of the interaction among history, subject position, and subjectivity; she emphasizes connection with, rather than alienation from others; and, to give us strength to sustain the hard work of witnessing, she offers the concept of "working-through" that is grounded in an ethic of love. Taken together, these elements of Oliver's theory of witnessing support mentors who wish to respond to their protégés in ways that will open relationships with them in spite of the obstacles presented by the academic context. In turn, mentors who witness might open transformative possibilities for the students, themselves, and the academy. A vision of mentorship seen through Oliver's theory of witnessing relies on self-reflection, listening, connection, and a political commitment to moving beyond domination.

The Risks of Recognition

The subtitle to Oliver's book *Witnessing* must be noted: *Beyond Recognition* announces her criticism of Enlightenment concepts of individual identity that are founded upon fixed notions of the self, independent from and constructed in opposition to others. In these, she writes, "we come to recognize ourselves as subjects or active agents through recognition from others; …a positive sense of self is dependent on positive recognition from others."[5] Oliver's understanding of subjectivity is instead situated in the event of relating to the other, and this is why she asks us to move beyond recognition. We are not independent selves before we relate to one another, but rather, we become ourselves as we participate in our relationships. Like Biesta, she owes a great deal to Lévinas, but her concerns are deepened by a strongly felt moral urgency. She provides powerful reasons for making the effort to be conscious of, and work toward, the difficult to sustain concept

[5] Ibid., 4.

that our subjectivity arises in relationship with others. If we care about our ability to create and nurture ethical relationships across difference, it becomes vital to sustain this idea of subjectivity when we realize that our conception of the self lies at the heart of our relations with others.

> Certainly, how we conceive of ourselves determines how we conceive of others, and vice versa. If we conceive of ourselves as self-identical, and we conceive of identity as opposed to difference, and we conceive of anything or anyone outside the boundaries of ourselves as different, then we will conceive of anything different or outside ourselves as a threat to our own identity. Identity will be pitted against difference. Relations will be hostile.... Moreover, our conceptions of our relationships determine how we behave toward others and ourselves. There is an intimate and necessary correspondence between how we conceive of others and how we treat them.[6]

Oliver hopes to interrupt antagonistic concepts of subjectivity and the hostile relations they can provoke, and points out that the "rhetoric of the other in itself denies subjectivity to those othered within dominant culture."[7] Her theory of witnessing provides another way to conceive of subjectivity that not only restores subjectivity to those in othered social positions, but moves past antagonistic relational models based on recognition that grow out of the Enlightenment, models that may vex relationships with students.

Recognition can sneak up on mentors in many ways: when we think we completely comprehend a student's life experience because we hail from the same social class or ethnic background, or because we have read and studied their cultural heritage; or when we look at traditional academic gifts as the only signs of potential, such as labeling a student a "good writer." Even pride in a student's accomplishment can tip the balance toward recognition. "He is a first-generation, low income student, and look what he attained!" At their root, such comments reinscribe the social and academic hierarchies

[6] Ibid. 2-3.
[7] Ibid., 6.

I seek to disrupt. The first-generation student is defined against the invisible, privileged student discussed in the first chapter, a student who represents academic norms and expectations. The "first-generation" label also describes many students in opposition to their mentors. Mentors may therefore be prone to recognition, making assumptions about students; they may describe students in ways that can easily lead to thinking they know who students are. For instance, mentors might think that first-generation students will need more guidance through the process of applying to graduate school, and this is indeed often true. It may provide some helpful information to consider as mentors begin their work, but they cannot allow such assumptions, however likely, to define who a student is in her entirety. Doing so will encourage mentors to slip into traditional, grooming approaches to mentorship that distance them from their students, and they are then less likely to disrupt the rational community. Simply because a student does not perform well on the GRE or needs guidance to construct a statement of purpose does not mean that she cannot flourish in a prestigious and challenging graduate program. Limiting concepts of a student's potential to what is easily known and recognized will likewise limit possibilities for transformation—for both mentor and student. Recognition defines the other, and does not allow for mystery. Mentors can look for a student's traits, gifts, and possibilities, but they must resist the urge to objectify and limit the protégé to what can be seen—what is recognized. These are the risks of recognition, and they inhibit practices that promote mutuality and egalitarian relationships.

Johnson's prescriptions and techniques for mentorship codify common sense ideas that many mentors think and act upon, but unfortunately, they are directly descended from Enlightenment concepts of the self that Oliver resists. This is especially

clear when he asserts that "[t]he unflagging faith and confidence of a mentor may have a nearly miraculous effect on a protégé's self-confidence."[8] He assumes mentors can recognize protégés' lack of confidence as well as remedy it through their recognition; with a mentor's recognition, the protégé is able construct a positive self-identity. When writing specifically on mentoring across race, he calls for recognition in a different form when he asks mentors to "work to understand the experience and unique mentoring needs of minority groups,"[9] to pursue cultural sensitivity, to appreciate "each protégé's uniqueness within his or her culture," and to recognize "race-based adjustment issues and sources of stress."[10] This advice seems benign—perhaps even helpful-- at first, yet quickly veers dangerously toward essentializing assumptions that rely on recognition in ways that only reinforce the status quo. Johnson clearly believes that mentors can come to understand a protégé's academic and emotional needs, and that studying her cultural background will provide enough direction for wise mentorship. This is a totalizing gesture that denies the protégé's mystery and produces formulaic interactions that cannot disrupt the rational community. Johnson notes that underrepresented students have faced a history of exclusion, but he believes that this can lead to "internalized racism,"[11] an extremely problematic, deficit-oriented concept that arises out of a modernist understanding of the oppressed/oppressor binary. He assumes that such interpretations of a student's psychological make-up are valid descriptions. It is especially troubling that he claims to understand raced-based concerns, and that he calls them "adjustment issues" is a patronizing way to blame the student for any problems that crop up in the relationship.

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[8] Johnson and Ridley, *The Elements of Mentoring*, 12.
[9] Ibid., 93.
[10] Johnson, *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*, 174.
[11] Ibid., 167.

He seems to create a disturbing management plan for molding students in a particular way: if a mentor does her cultural homework, she will be better able to move past a student's internal and cultural barriers to bring a student into the academic fold. In an especially disconcerting passage, Johnson advises mentors to "shape behavior"[12] and to "deliberately reinforce evidence of growth and improvement."[13] He has a distinct and clear-cut agenda for mentorship, and it includes neither the mystery of the student nor the possibility that the mentor might be very much changed in the process. Rather, she is a "sculptor" who creates an object of beauty out of rough stone. His ideas would make it very difficult to mentor outsiders into the university in a transformative way; rather, they have a strong tendency to exacerbate existing differences and relational tensions. Although he understands that underrepresented students' "experiences and perspectives [are] missing or devalued in academic cannons [sic] and classroom instruction,"[14] his goal always seems to be to integrate them into the existing institution, rather than to transform the institution itself. Further, his individualistic concept of mentorship is a problem. He asserts that it focuses on the "personal needs and career goals" of the protégé, and that for outsider protégés, this often opposes "the interests of the larger [ethnic/ community] group or family."[15] He maintains that for this reason, it can be difficult for students with a collectivist orientation to accept mentoring, because their cultural values "inhibit"[16] relationships that focus on them as individuals. Such deficit-oriented, essentializing views are insidious, and reveal the true intent of traditional

[12] Johnson and Ridley, *The Elements of Mentoring*, 19.
[13] Ibid., 21.
[14] Johnson, *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*, 168.
[15] Ibid., 170.
[16] Ibid.

mentoring—a reification of the status quo that objectifies the student and reinscribes the academic and social hierarchies that trouble efforts to create mutuality.

Even the most beneficent, well-intentioned mentor operates out of a similar position when she makes statements that first-generation students do not have social capital, or that, barring intervention, they do not have the educational background necessary to succeed in the academy. These statements may well contain an element of truth, but they do not take into account the strengths students may bring with them, such as bilingualism or the community orientation[17] that Johnson regards as an obstacle to mentorship. What is perceived as a weakness for his rational mentoring can be viewed instead as a means of transformation if mentors will make the effort to look beyond recognition. It is not so much that Johnson's advice is entirely incorrect. Mentors do, in fact, often enter relationships with protégés because they recognize academic talents; as they work with protégés, they may come to more fully recognize their background and life experiences. I agree with Johnson that mentors might strive to gain cultural knowledge and understand their students' backgrounds, but this is just a beginning; it is unacceptable to use our limited knowledge and understanding to essentialize as he does. Doing so leads to false assumptions that are demeaning to the student and may foreclose opportunities for response. Further, some of Johnson's knowledge-seeking leads to forms of recognition that other students or reinscribe an oppressed/ oppressor binary. Mentors need to guard against this type of recognition. They must not succumb to thinking they truly know their protégés.

[17] Dolores Delgado Bernal, *ChicanaLatina Education in Everyday Life: Feminista Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

Thus far, recognition would seem to have little positive value. However, it does have redeeming virtues. I understand from research that is guided by Critical Race and related theories-- Latina/o, Tribal, and Chicana Feminist critical theories—that the students we serve in the McNair Scholars Program have indeed been othered in the academy. Recognition serves a useful purpose when it illuminates these concerns. And similar to the Chicana Ford Fellows, McNair Scholars' research interests are often an outgrowth of such experiences: they wish to study and name what has happened to them, to bring their stories to light and make them visible to themselves and others—those in more dominant positions, as well as others from their background. They wish to redress wrongs, and part of this is to have their experiences recognized. CRT-based research or Latina *testimonios* offer a means for students who have been othered in the academy to assert their subjectivity as they relate their experiences of exclusion, hurt, and invisibility; they bear witness. Indeed these very words are emphasized by the Latina Feminist Group. For these scholars, *testimonio* is a self-reflective, social method of feminist research praxis, a "means of bearing witness and inscribing into history those lived realities that would otherwise succumb to the alchemy of erasure."[18] *Testimonios* create an intersubjective space that compels the open, responsive listener or reader to absorb another's experience to the best of her ability. When students use this approach to research, it is often driven by a desire to help their community (in the commonly-held understanding), and it can bring power and purpose to their research agendas. Academics and research become forms of activism, arising out of a protégé's sense of self and the experiences she has had in the academy. Oliver acknowledges that creating visibility is a powerful tool; this type of research reveals the helpful side of recognition. Likewise,

[18] Luz del Alba Acevedo and Inc ebrary, *Telling to Live* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 2.

recognition may be a useful place to begin relationships with students, but if the entire pedagogical relationship is built on this foundation, it will end in objectifying the student. Oliver wishes to be careful that recognition does not reinscribe the subordinate, objectified position of the one who has been othered. Rather, in her theory of witnessing, she provides a way for mentors to promote egalitarian relationships in spite of their positions within the academic hierarchy.

Opening Possibilities for Response beyond Recognition

Writing pedagogy reveals the limits of recognition in the university setting; likewise, critical approaches to writing can point the way toward approaches that will help mentors learn how to respond beyond recognition. Each academic discipline recognizes and reinforces its own particular writing conventions; students who are "good writers" are identified – recognized— by their facility with these forms. But learning to write in an "academic" style can be a challenge for some outsider protégés, and mentors must respond with care when offering correction and guidance, else they may appear as mere representatives of the disciplinary status quo whose goal is to reproduce the rational community. Certainly, mentors need to recognize cultural differences in written expression, and they must address mechanical and organizational concerns that pose barriers to students' academic success. In this way, they will help protégés learn accepted standards, but their feedback should not be so harsh that students' confidence is undermined. This can easily result in the feeling they are not fit to remain in the academy. Mentors who are too critical inhibit opportunities for future conversations-- they also limit possibilities for change.

The idea is to find an approach to interactions with a protégé that moves beyond recognition, to open a discussion that will engage the student, allowing her to respond. What is more, the mentor witnesses; she remains open to being changed by the student's response. Learning how to do so will enable mentors to provide academic direction without reinscribing students' subordinate status and will therefore support more egalitarian relationships. Nancy Welch describes this give and take with Margie, a student in the writing center who "pushed against and changed entirely [Welch's] early notions of what [her] text ought to look like."[19] Even as she worked with Margie in a setting where she had more power, Welch was open to being changed; her responsiveness was egalitarian in this regard. The one on one relationship between writing center tutor and student is a good model for mentorship, but the similarities run deeper than this. Marilyn Cooper, also a writing teacher, envisions writing centers as sites of

> inquiry and critique, where tutors not only are helping students learn how to improve their writing but also are developing better practices of teaching writing and really useful knowledge about the experiences of students writing in college and in our society.[20]

The writing center she describes is thus a site of critical consciousness. In one of his scholarly articles, Mike Rose[21] places writing instruction on the periphery of the university curriculum, not held in as high regard as other subjects. But because it is on the fringes, it is also a place where transformation and a move beyond domination can occur when tutors help students understand "how various institutional forces impinge on how and what they write and how they can negotiate a place for their own goals and needs

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[19] Nancy Welch, "From Silence to Noise: The Writing Center as Critical Exile," *The Writing Center Journal* 14, no. 1 (Fall 1993), 11.
[20] Marilyn M. Cooper, "Really Useful Knowledge: A Cultural Studies Agenda for Writing Centers," in *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*, eds. Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood, Third ed. (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2008), 65.
[21] Mike Rose, "The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University," *College English* 47, no. 4 (April 1985).

when faced with these forces."[22] To do this, writing tutors witness. They "build personal relationships with their students and come to understand how their students' lives and experiences shape their writing practices."[23] In their responses to the other's writing, they open possibilities for the other to respond.

Similar to the writing center, opportunity programs occupy a border site between marginalized students and the mainstream university. As I ask mentors to do, Cooper's writing center tutors align themselves with the students they assist, but remain aware of the complications in their relationship, both personal and academic. Resonating with my call to transform the academy by fostering the community of strangers, Cooper asks that tutors be open and responsive to what students bring to the writing center, to be changed by their interactions with them, and to allow what they learn in the process of relating to change writing pedagogy itself.[24] In Cooper's words,

> Rather than insisting that students are the only ones responsible for their texts, tutors help students understand how their worlds and their texts are inhabited by multiple and often alien voices that they must learn to deal with. Rather than [following North's direction for tutors to completely support a teacher's position], tutors help students negotiate a place within the confines of writing assignments for interests and abilities that arise out of their experiences. Rather than lamenting the inability of students to produce perfect papers, tutors celebrate students' ability to develop new "templates" for texts. Rather than learning to sit across from the student and not write on their papers, tutors learn to critique the social and institutional setting of writing pedagogy and to reflect on their practices in light of theories of writing and language.[25]

If writing center tutors and directors wish to change how writing is taught, as well as counter the normalizing functions the teaching of writing fulfills in the university, then doing so begins in their relationships with students whose words and meanings are

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[22] Cooper, *Really Useful Knowledge: A Cultural Studies Agenda for Writing Centers*, 58.
[23] Ibid., 65.
[24] Ibid., 60.
[25] Ibid., 65-66.

contested within the mainstream academic culture.[26] In Cooper's writing center, a self-reflective tutor meets the student being advised in the event of their relationship, creating a responsive space; the relationships they cultivate are places where the community of strangers can come into being within the rational academic community. Both tutor and student have the opportunity to come into presence. This is a portrait of Oliver's witnessing in action within an academic context.

A fine example of witnessing in the writing center is developed in Welch's description of her interchanges with Margie, who is writing on the very personal topic of sexual harassment. Margie reads an early draft aloud to Welch, and Welch admits that she already holds an idea of what Margie should write-- that she is disturbed by the difference between her vision and the text Margie reads to her in the tutoring session.

> [T]he very topic of sexual harassment and Margie's apparent nervousness move me to become a stranger to my usual questions and to that Ideal Text. As Margie pauses in her reading, eyes me, then stumbles over a phrase before continuing, I have the disquieting sense that my interrogatives may sound like (and be) an interrogation and that my voice may echo, even intensify the competing voices Margie is already silenced by. My questions may indeed assist her in speedily writing a perfect, conventionally correct story that no one can criticize, but…it's also convention and an insistence on the appearance of perfection that make sexual harassment and the silencing of it possible in the first place.[27]

Welch relates her urge to ask clarifying questions, but she resists doing so. Instead, she is self-reflective; she works from Lugones' engaged position, mindful of her place in the academy, and aware that Margie might be fearful of her as well as suspicious of her motives. She is mindful, too, of how Margie has been hurt and dominated in the work place. Searching for a relationship with Margie that is beyond domination, Welch politicizes her position; she does not want to perpetuate the atmosphere of hierarchy and

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[26] Ibid., 58.
[27] Welch, *From Silence to Noise: The Writing Center as Critical Exile*, 7.

patriarchy that spawns sexual harassment. Welch seeks to offer academic direction without reinscribing power differentials, and so encourages and draws from Margie an act of transformative resistance, a positive educational strategy described by Delgado Bernal. It is used by marginalized students to "successfully navigate through the educational system"[28] and to claim educational space in an institution that has excluded their voices. Using writing center techniques such as "loop writing" to examine the "codes that create and control conversations about sexual harassment,"[29] Welch emphasizes Margie's strengths and experiences. Loop writing involves asking Margie to name, explore, and question the "socio-symbolic contract that forms her experience and others' responses to it."[30] In the tutorial process she and Margie develop, Welch allows her preconceived notions of the writing to be changed, and Margie's text emerges rather than Welch's Ideal Text. Despite her vulnerable position with regard to both Welch and the institution as a whole, Margie is able to produce a text that does far more than enable her to cope with a tense situation. Welch continues to consult with Margie, working "at ways to read her emerging text and the discourse she sees as closer to the body and emotions of her experience."[31] This approach disrupts the intent of the rational community to valorize the form and content of conventional academic writing. Welch witnessed; she was responsive to Margie, and she changed her pedagogical approach, opening possibilities for Margie to transgress academic norms.

The concept of witnessing is complex. Simply put, it is the event that brings our subjectivity into presence. Oliver shares with Biesta the dialogic view that subjectivity

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[28] Delgado Bernal, *ChicanaLatina Education in Everyday Life: Feminista Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology*, 115.
[29] Welch, *From Silence to Noise: The Writing Center as Critical Exile*, 7.
[30] Ibid., 8.
[31] Ibid., 9.

arises in relationship with others: that it exists in the event of relating and responding to the other, who is ultimately an unknowable mystery, "beyond any description we can give."[32] As Oliver describes subjectivity, it "is the result of the process of witnessing,"[33] which is "the ability to respond to, and address, others."[34] Witnessing is symmetrical, because it constitutes subjectivity for those in dominant as well as those in marginalized positions. It is Oliver's answer to the idea of coming into presence, but her use of the term "witness" is important because it encompasses multiple meanings of the word as both noun and verb: one can be a witness, which involves seeing an event, or one can witness in the sense of giving testimony. The word also emphasizes the moral dimension of subjectivity. "It is important to note that witnessing has both juridical connotations of seeing with one's own eyes and the religious connotations of testifying to that which cannot be seen, in other words, bearing witness."[35] For Oliver, the double meanings of the word witnessing-- being an eyewitness with firsthand knowledge, and bearing witness to what cannot be seen, what is beyond recognition—lie at "the heart of subjectivity."[36] Cooper's tutors have learned to put the double meanings into practice: a student whose writing is contested bears witness and addresses the tutor; the tutor apprehends what is beyond recognition, truly responding and addressing the student, always cognizant of social positions and the complicated, conflicted academic space they inhabit.

In elaborating the idea of witnessing, Oliver carefully distinguishes subjectivity from our subject positions, which

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[32] Frank Margonis, "A Relational Ethic of Solidarity?" *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2007), 65.
[33] Oliver, *Witnessing : Beyond Recognition*, 7.
[34] Ibid., 15.
[35] Ibid., 16.
[36] Ibid.

> …are our relations to the finite world of human history and relations—what we might call politics. Subjectivity, on the other hand, is experienced as the sense of agency and response-ability that are constituted in the infinite encounter with otherness, which is fundamentally ethical. And although subjectivity is logically prior to any possible subject position, in our experience both are always profoundly interconnected. This is why our experience of our own subjectivity is the result of the productive tension between finite subject position and infinite response-ability of witnessing.[37]

The productive tension between our subject position and subjectivity allows for the possibility of transformation through the event of witnessing. Welch's work with Margie grew out of the tension between her subject position as a writing tutor and her wish to have an ethical encounter with Margie that would not reproduce the objectification she had experienced as a result of sexual harassment. In witnessing, each party has the ability to address and respond to the other. Further, "[w]e have an obligation not only to respond but also to respond in a way that opens up rather than closes off the possibility of response by others."[38] Relationships with others are, therefore, first and foremost ethical in nature. Welch struggled to respond to Margie, and to keep the possibility open for Margie to respond in return. In practice, writing center tutors might open possibilities for students to respond with new templates for texts, or help students find ways to incorporate their strengths and interests into the confines of an assignment. With regard to mentorship, it means that when mentors address or respond to protégés, they must do so in a way that allows and encourages their response. This is the event of witnessing.

A Commitment to Witness

Witnessing is a valuable concept for mentors, because it promotes egalitarian relationships, even if protégés enter them tentatively, wary of power differences. Margie

[37] Ibid., 17.
[38] Ibid., 18.

certainly exhibits such caution: she fears her story will be criticized by listeners or readers, and she is nervous when she meets with Welch. But witnessing gave Welch a basis on which to work with Margie, a way to enter relationship with her that supported them both in the event of coming into presence. It encompassed the exclusionary history of higher education (Margie was a divorced mother of three, a nontraditional student); microaggressions Margie may have experienced; and a call to remain open to the academic work she proposed, even though it came from a place beyond recognition, beyond Welch's vision.

We have seen that in witnessing, mentor and protégé depend upon one another for their subjectivity, which is grounded in their "address-ability and response-ability."[39] But Oliver also emphasizes it is the "double meaning [of the word] that makes witnessing such a powerful alternative to recognition in reconceiving subjectivity and therefore ethical relations"[40] More than recognition is needed for true subjectivity. Both parties in a relationship must witness; our subjectivity is thus inextricably linked to, and called forth through, an ethical response to the other. Importantly, bearing witness to what is beyond recognition also means that mentors and students acknowledge history and relations of power as they respond to one another; this enhances the possibility of having more symmetrical relationships. When a mentor attends to a student's tale of classroom microaggressions, or listens with openness and receptivity to a young Latina give her *testimonio*, both are witnessing. The student bears witness to her experiences, addressing the mentor. The mentor must take care not to objectify the student, but attunes herself to what is beyond recognition, what she cannot understand, even as she recognizes the truth

[39] Ibid., 19.
[40] Ibid., 16.

of the student's experience. But more than this, when they are addressed, mentors must respond to students in ways that allow them the possibility to respond in return. This, according to Oliver, is the infinite responsibility of Lévinas. Remember Mike Rose and his poetry students: his classroom interactions with them were lived examples of witnessing events, always bearing witness to historical inequities while opening possibilities for students to respond.

The need to respond to and address others echoes Biesta's concern for responsibility and responsiveness, and surely he would concur that an ethical obligation to the other lies at the center of our own subjectivity. For Oliver, responsiveness in witnessing must rise from a sense of the limits of our understanding, that we apprehend there are things beyond our recognition—what I have previously called the mystery of the student. In this, Oliver also resonates with Kerdeman's idea that we must allow ourselves to be pulled up short by what we cannot fathom. To make her points, Oliver uses the ultimate cases of the Holocaust and slavery; certainly, those of us who have not experienced these traumas cannot fully comprehend them when we hear victims' testimonies. However, when mentors listen to stories of academic exclusion and microaggressions, a similar dynamic takes place if they are attuned to the mystery of the student: they take in the facts that students relate, but remain alert to the idea that they cannot share or understand their experiences. Even as mentors recognize students' experiences, it is necessary, as Schultz would encourage us, to listen for the silences and mystery-- what is beyond recognition.

Oliver does not shy away from the social and political responsibility that witnessing implies, and for this reason she is well suited to the pedagogical task of

helping mentors understand what it is involved in responding to students across difference. Education is, after all, an inherently social and political endeavor, and we have seen how educational legacies of exclusion contribute to the difficulty of mentoring outsiders into the academy. History is always present in Oliver's work; she understands that subject positions are embedded within sociohistoric power differentials, and that these trouble efforts to create peaceful and democratic relationships across difference. Our subject positions are determined by history, but our sense of ourselves as agents who act in the world is the result of witnessing relationships. This is a significant point. Exchanges with students are always grounded in the social and educational histories we each bring to the relationship, but witnessing to one another is what opens the possibility for mentor and protégé alike to address others outside of their dyad and to actively collaborate in transformative academic work. Rather than merely seeking recognition from oppressors, those who have been wronged-- following both Frantz Fanon and bell hooks-- are to become "the source of [their] own meaning making."[41] Witnessing relationships make this possible. Students who attempt to create their own meaning within an alienating institution deserve and need the support that a mentor can provide through witnessing. Research projects (such as those the Chicana researchers proposed) that bear witness to historical legacies of oppression offer opportunities to transform both student and mentor. They have the potential to transform exclusionary structures through new policy initiatives, as well. I recall another example of transformative resistance-- a Latina college researcher who encouraged low-income, "at-risk" Latina high school students to tell their stories, to connect with one another for support, and to earn their diplomas and enter college. The McNair Scholar learned and used traditional academic

[41] Ibid., 29.

research methods—supporting her passage through the dominant system-- but she conducted a study that witnessed in both meanings of the word. The students who participated in the study bore witness to the ways in which they were marginalized in their predominantly white high school; their subjectivity arose in the process of relating their stories, in addressing the researcher and having her respond to them. The McNair Scholar also developed a deeper sense of subjectivity in the process of contesting educational practices that marginalized her study participants, and her sense of purpose was sharpened. I can only imagine that the same was true for her mentor, whose research agenda continues to support this type of work.

If mentors find their own subjectivity in the process and event of witnessing, the first step is to honor students' experiences and testimonies. This borders on recognition, but witnessing connotes that more than recognition is required of mentors who wish to truly respond to students. Indeed, to think we recognize them is rather patronizing; it separates and distances us from them. It is preferable to strive for appreciation rather than recognition. The words of students I have offered in previous chapters resonate with the double meanings of witnessing: they are eyewitness testimony to the ways in which students have been othered, and yet there are dimensions to their accounts that are beyond the ability for mentors to recognize, that bear witness to what cannot be seen. When that which is beyond recognition informs mentors' responses to students, they are witnessing, and their own subjectivity embraces its ethical dimensions.

Although witnessing offers an approach to subjectivity based on mutuality, it is crucial to note that students need not join mentors in this view. Indeed, in Lévinasian ethics, one cannot tell others what to do; such ethical claims are coercive, and violate his

asymmetrical commitment to the other. Similar to Frank Margonis' description of a "one-way ethic of solidarity,"[42] mentors who witness nurture a "commitment to drawing out the distinctive perspectives of individual students, despite the operations of hierarchical power relationships."[43] If a protégé has been othered and objectified by her historical position, and if the mentor is in a more dominant position—and all mentors are, if only because they are in a position of authority-- it is particularly important for the mentor to take a witnessing approach to the relationship. They may find guidance in the ethic of witnessing without asking or assuming that protégés share their motivation. Paradoxically, it is an asymmetrical commitment to a vision of a symmetrical, egalitarian relationship between mentor and protégé. A mentor's role is to not merely to guide a protégé through the research protocol, but to stay connected and to encourage the protégé in the event and process of witnessing. Connection is at the heart of creating an atmosphere that will encourage students to remain in conversation with mentors. Nancy Welch worked to maintain her connection with Margie, and this is reflected in the results of her exchanges.

Staying Connected: An Ethic of Love

Oliver explains another major difficulty with the concept of recognition: if we recognize ourselves in opposition to those who are different from us, relations with others become struggles for recognition and ethical social relations can be difficult.

> …[I]f we start from the assumption that relations are essentially antagonistic struggles for recognition, then it is no wonder that contemporary theorists spend so much energy trying to imagine how these struggles can lead to compassionate personal relations, ethical social relations, or democratic political relations.[44]

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[42] Margonis, *A Relational Ethic of Solidarity?*, 68.
[43] Ibid., 67.
[44] Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 4.

Rather than construct a sense of self in opposition to the student, privileging separation and distance from the other, Oliver would ask mentors to accept that they are already connected to others. It should be noted, however, that connection to others does not necessarily imply we always get along with them. With this as a starting point, the aim of the pedagogical relationship is to develop more fruitful forms of connection. First, this means mentors become self-reflective and consider how students perceive and address them before they respond. A mentor's internal dialogue might wonder: my subjectivity is dependent upon others, so when a student distances herself from me – through body language or lack of communication—I have an opportunity to better understand myself in relation to her. How do I imagine I am seen by this person, and why might that be?

For example, a student I will call Angela seemed nervous coming to the office to talk about class absences some professors had reported to the program coordinator and me. Mostly, we were concerned about family stressors that were making it hard for her to complete assignments and attend class, but it took most of the meeting for her to reveal that she felt on the "hot seat" because we were in a position of authority. She had been worrying that her participation in the McNair program might be in danger. In expressing this fear, and accepting our reply (no, it is not, we stand behind you), she visibly relaxed and said that from that time forward she would see us as friends and allies rather than people with power over her. It was a reminder to always hold in mind how students who have been objectified and othered by the educational system might perceive me, simply by virtue of my skin color or my position as McNair director. My relationships with them cannot escape these complications, and I have no reason to expect otherwise.

Maintaining a sense of connection can be a hard task when what is beyond recognition becomes central to mentorship, because the focus is on the mystery that I have said has the potential to alienate us from the other. Mentors may be likely to emphasize the difficulty in relating. Oliver handles this concern by rethinking the concept of vision itself. "Recognition…supposedly results from vision attempting to bridge the abyss of empty space between the subject and its object."[45] But our sense of vision "involves touching light, [and as such] we are touched by and touching everything around us even as we see the distance between ourselves and…other people."[46] In this understanding, vision is a means of connection rather than separation. Further, space is not merely a void that separates us from one another;

> [i]t is full of air, light, and the circulation of various forms of … energy that sustain us and connect us to each other and the world. If space is not empty, and if vision connects us …we can imagine an alternative form of recognition, which gives rise to an alternative conception of subjectivity and identity.[47]

To conceive of vision and space as a means of connection with others does several things to help sustain witnessing. It supports mentors in remembering that to depend upon students for their subjectivity is not a cause for concern.

> Why does dependency have to be figured as violent, alienating, subjugating, and dominating? Only if we start with the ideal of the self-possessed autonomous subject is dependence threatening. If, however, we give up that ideal and operate in the world with a truly interrelational conception of subjectivity, a subjectivity without subjects, then dependence is seen as the force of life, as the very possibility of change….[48]

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[45] Ibid., 11.
[46] Ibid., 212.
[47] Ibid., 12.
[48] Ibid., 68.

To conceive of vision in such a way that we view ourselves as profoundly connected to, rather than separated from, one another, supports the radically intersubjective idea that our own subjectivity depends upon how we respond to others. *Mitakuye oyasin:* we are all related, is the Lakota phrase that summarizes such a view.[49] Mentors who witness are called to maintain a sense of connection with, and relation to, protégés, in spite of hidden or acknowledged tensions that might lie between them.

With acceptance of our connection to others comes a movement toward the other: what is beyond recognition, what we cannot comprehend, propels us. Mystery and experiences beyond our recognition thus take on a positive tone. Oliver cites Luce Irigaray's argument that "'the negative that enables me to go toward you.'"[50]

> It is the negative in the sense of the phrases "I cannot know you," "I cannot be you," "I will never master you" that allows for relationships beyond domination, beyond recognition. As soon as I am sure that I know you, that I know what you will do next, I have stopped having a relationship with you and instead have a relationship with myself, my own projection onto you. When I think I know you, our relationship is over.[51]

This passage calls to mind the professor whose concept of mentorship is to groom a student to enter the academy. She thinks she knows the student (or at least the student's potential), and that she also knows what needs to be done at every step of the mentoring process. No room exists for what is beyond recognition and the ways the mentor might be dependent upon the student for her subjectivity and transformation. To put it another way, when recognition is the foundation for mentorship, it can only lead to the rational community. By contrast, when we move beyond recognition, holding in mind our connection with others, we have the possibility to enter the community of strangers.

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[49] Gregory Cajete, *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education*, 1st ed. (Durango, Colo.: Kivakí Press, 1994).
[50] Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 209.
[51] Ibid., 209-210.

To encourage a sense of connection with others, and sustain us in the Sisyphean task of transforming the academy, Oliver relies on an ethic of love. Love is essential for transformational mentors who align themselves with their students, striving to overcome institutional forces. Love encourages them to maintain connection and to move toward students, even though they must do so within a complicated web of power relations. Love reminds mentors that to disrupt the hierarchy and create egalitarian relations beyond domination, they need to look past their own interests. This is not love in the common sense of an emotion reserved only for those closest to us, nor as an "abstract and ahistorical metaphor"[52] that allows for a false sense of connection, glossing over "historic chasms created by colonial histories of genocide, enslavement, and stolen lands."[53] Nor can Oliver's idea of love be replaced with empathy. As Biesta notes, "the main problem with empathy is that it assumes we can simply (and comfortably) take the position of the other, thereby denying both the situatedness of one's own seeing and thinking and that of the other's."[54] Empathy thus denies the student's mystery. In contrast, love is "the ethical agency that motivates a move toward others, across differences. Love motivates a move beyond self-interested political action, which is necessary to move beyond domination."[55] Education is a political act, and a mentor's action can be motivated by an ethic of love that acknowledges difference and mystery, yet strives for connection. Actions motivated by love seek transformation rather than domination and objectification.

Similar to the McNair research project previously described, the writing center envisioned by Welch and Cooper can be thought of as a site of transformational

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[52] Margonis, *A Relational Ethic of Solidarity?*, 67.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Biesta, *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future*, 91.
[55] Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 218.

resistance that moves beyond domination. It might, to some, be a surprising place to look for an ethic of love in action. But remember that Welch and Cooper critique the institution they hope to transform— the writing center, for them, is a site of critical consciousness. Because of this I propose that an ethic of love supports director, tutor, and student as they enter the community of strangers. Although Welch and Cooper do not refer to love, this understanding springs from Fanon and hooks.

> Ethics is a matter of love [for Fanon]—the values of human reality and wishing for the others what you wish for yourself. And this ethical commitment to love is necessarily part of a politics of liberation. Love restores the agency of the oppressed subject, an agency that is destroyed insofar as she or he is made into an object with the dominant culture.[56]

bell hooks resonates with Fanon when she declares the connection between love and freedom: "'The moment we choose to love we begin to move toward freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others. That action is the testimony of love as the practice of freedom.'"[57] Writing tutors who work in the way Cooper describes go far to move beyond domination; Oliver would say they have chosen love and a move toward freedom as they help students create space for themselves within the dominant mainstream institution. Mentors who strive toward open, responsive practices also create a space of love and freedom beyond the asymmetries of power inherent in their relationships with students.

Fanon and hooks have a vision of love as a nearly palpable force that is necessary for social and political transformation, and, like Freire,[58] I would argue that it is also necessary to transform education. Oliver underscores hooks' vision of love as a choice:

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[56] Ibid., 42-43.
[57] Ibid., 44.
[58] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* [Pedagogía del oprimido.] (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

> …it is a willful decision. We can choose to love or we can choose not to love. In this regard, love is an attitude that we willingly cultivate toward others. … Love is not something we choose once and for all.[59]

In her discussion of love, Oliver also describes it as "an openness to others," [60] as well as a "vigilant concern for others."[61] Oliver asks us to choose an ethic of love "consciously and decisively," [62] and we must choose love over and over again through self-reflection which "…is not a turn inward but a turn toward otherness."[63] Self-reflection means we ponder the "reflection of otherness that constitutes the self as a subject."[64] This is what I attempted to do in the scenario with Angela: to turn toward her to see how my self was being constituted, and to base my response to her on that. Such self-reflection is necessary to help negotiate blind spots, so we might learn to apprehend what we cannot see;[65] it is one way we can bring an ethic of love to our actions.

To choose love is also to silence the rational and arrogant voices of the academy into which we have been socialized. It is remembering to drop our defenses, to stop our inner dialogue so that we can listen fully and deeply—to truly hear what a student is saying, as Delpit would ask us to do. In choosing love, we accept the need for an "ethical hesitation"[66] in which we are "unsure of [our] boundaries and [the] limits of [our] liability"[67]—and, I would add—unsure of our abilities to relate across difference. We all know what it feels like to hesitate: it is an embodied response, but also a mental and emotional state, one that can prevent the rush to recognize and judge the other. Hesitation

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[59] Ibid., 220-221.
[60] Ibid., 220.
[61] Ibid., 218.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Julian Edgoose, "An Ethics of Hesitant Learning: The Caring Justice of Levinas and Derrida," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (1997).
[67] Ibid., 272.

allows for another important facet of choosing love-- working on the disposition to be pulled up short, accepting the disorientation we feel when our beliefs and common-sense understandings are brought into question.

But following Fanon and hooks, more than personal acts of self-reflection are necessary. Oliver asserts that "[o]pening a public space of love and generosity is crucial to opening a space beyond domination."[68] College classrooms and offices can become public spaces of love and generosity if mentors make an effort to create them as spaces beyond domination, where they move beyond recognition and enter into witnessing relationships with their protégés. They become spaces of risky action, where we make public our decisions to support students as they attempt to enter—and often contest-- an ongoing academic conversation. Opening spaces of love and generosity is made easier when mentors remember their connection with others and strive to manifest Irigaray's "loving look."[69] The opposite of the objectifying gaze of the oppressor, the "loving look" does not see the other as an object, but "sees the invisible in the visible."[70] Loving looks are an instrument of witnessing, and therefore serve our subjectivity; they take in what is beyond recognition. In one way, the loving look helps prepare us for the ethical hesitation as well as for listening: we remember our connection to the other, and we are perhaps more inclined to attend to what they say, to understand that students are "the only authentic chroniclers of their own experience."[71] Oliver invites us to go further yet-- to see others "through loving eyes that invite a loving response."[72] Vision itself is transformed. It connects, rather than separates us, and according to Oliver, loving looks

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[68] Ibid., 44.
[69] Ibid., 215.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Delpit, *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*, 47.
[72] Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 19.

transform the objectifying, colonizing gaze of recognition that distances mentor from protégé.

It is within this context of loving connection that I can return to the idea of responsive mentorship. To nurture responsiveness, it is imperative that

> …we acknowledge our dependence on each other, not just physical but also psychic dependence. Once we acknowledge that our very sense of ourselves as agents, and the subjectivity on which that agency rests, is the result of witnessing relationships to others and otherness, then, and only then, will we feel compelled by the ethical obligation inherent in subjectivity.[73]

Oliver provides compelling reasons to reconceptualize the nature of subjectivity, and she provides an ethic of love to move us beyond domination. An ethic of love can guide and sustain mentors in the hard work of moving toward others, maintaining connection, sustaining their political commitment, and witnessing to the best of their abilities. The choice to love must be made again and again: "it is a decision that must be constantly reaffirmed through the vigilance of 'self-reflection.'"[74] Oliver calls witnessing "the adventure of otherness,"[75] an attitude mentors might cultivate as they endeavor to be responsive to their students.

A Closer Look at Responsiveness

Biesta has told mentors they need to be responsive to students, but Oliver enables them to better consider what this entails. Witnessing is comprised of elements that I consider the building blocks of our ability to respond across difference: vigilance, elaboration, analysis, interpretation, and performing. Taken together, these form Oliver's concept of working-through and provide a framework for creating a responsive context

[73] Ibid., 131.
[74] Ibid., 221.
[75] Ibid., 20.

that supports transformational mentorship. Although there will never be a clear map or set of rules for mentors to follow, these concepts can illuminate what it means to truly respond to students. But prior to engaging with these ideas, Oliver reminds us that

> [a] crucial factor in the ability to transform totalizing subject positions into more fluid and response-able subjectivity is an acknowledgment of the differences in power and authority in different social positions…[for] in our day-to-day interactions, dialogues always take place within concrete political situations that constitute differential relations between participants.[76]

Doing so begins with mentors admitting what they have at stake in the academic system that perpetrates violence upon marginalized students.

> Only by acknowledging and interpreting our investments [in it]…can we begin to "work through" rather than repeat violence. "Working-through" is a profoundly ethical operation insofar as it forces us not only to acknowledge our relations and obligations to others—that is, the ethical foundations of subjectivity—but also thereby to transform those relations into more ethical relations through which we love or at least respect others rather than subordinate …them. By acknowledging power relations and our investments in them, we can change the structure of those relations.[77]

For me, this means acknowledging my investment in McNair Scholars attaining the objectives of the grant that funds our program. I am caught in a power relationship with the U.S. Department of Education in order to keep my livelihood, and my students are therefore in a power relationship with me; we are all in power relationships with the academy which we seek to transform. Bearing witness to their history in the academy is part of the process of changing the relations of power; even as I ask them to complete certain tasks, I explicitly tell them I do it in order to disrupt the bonds of power that grow from this history. Mentors are caught in similar power relations—disciplinary norms, departmental and university protocols all exert pressure on their relationships with

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[76] Ibid., 108-109.
[77] Ibidl, 68-69.

students. If mentors can follow the example of the writing center tutors, and hold in mind the sociohistorical and power differentials that lie between them and their protégés, they better attune themselves to listen. They can apprehend the meaning of body language and silences, behaviors they may call out of students merely because of their positions in authority or the color of their skin: Welch did just this when Margie stumbled reading and looked at her. And mentors can make a commitment to working-through, although this is a continual process.

Working-through begins with the listening and attunement that, following Biesta and Schultz, we know are important steps toward openness and responsiveness to others. Attentiveness to power relations is one aspect of listening to the context of students' lives. But how do these ideas help mentors move forward, to maintain connection with and respect for students, to become mentors in the spirit of Mike Rose? Oliver fleshes out the idea of working-through in her discussion of performance, elaboration and vigilance; their combination "makes openness to otherness possible."[78] Vigilance is key, for the other components of working-through must all be conducted with vigilance.

> Vigilance in elaborating, analyzing, and interpreting the process through which we become who we are, the process through which we become subjects and those othered. Vigilance in performing, in testifying and witnessing, vigilance in listening for the performance beyond meaning and recognition. …Vigilance in listening to the silences in which we are implicated and through which we are responsible to each other. …Vigilance is necessary to "recognize" the unrecognizable in the process of witnessing itself, to recognize that you cannot expect to recognize otherness. To demand vigilance is to demand infinite analysis through ongoing performance, elaboration, and interpretation.[79]

In mentorship, one aspect of vigilance might also be conceived of as alertness. Biesta, Delpit, and Schultz prepared the foundation by asking us to listen deeply. But mentoring

[78] Ibid., 133.
[79] Ibid.

requires staying alert on multiple levels. Vigilance includes attempting to foresee obstacles students might face, taking into consideration historical and academic/ social contexts, and forthrightly working with colleagues to pave the way for students, sometimes against the administration. Staying alert to students' thoughts and behaviors is also vital, and being vigilant in thoughtfully responding so that our responses to students do not foreclose possibilities for them to respond in return. Mentors also need to be vigilant in analyzing their own subject position and its effect on their subjectivity as well as their students'. They need to remain vulnerable to their students, open to their world views and experiences. Likewise, they must maintain awareness that students feel vulnerable to them. Welch's work with Margie is exemplary in this regard. Working-through involves ongoing, "infinite analysis" and self-reflection. This is the personal, introspective aspect of performance, but performance has at least two outward directions: in responses to protégés, and in taking the risk to bear witness to those outside of the immediate mentoring relationship when called to do so.

Vigilance also demands that mentors be persistent. The components of responsiveness are never accomplished once and for all. However, remembering their connection to students –choosing love over and over-- can help mentors hold in mind that their own subjectivity is dependent upon them, and so ethical by its very nature. Indeed, Oliver writes, "[t]he demand for vigilance as the demand for infinite analysis is the ethical imperative of subjectivity conceived in witnessing beyond recognition."[80] That they define our very selves creates a compelling reason to enter witnessing relationships across difference. Rather than focus on the difficulties in mentoring across difference,

[80] Ibid.

mentors who accept Oliver's mutual subjectivity can look at protégés with loving eyes, and maintain a sense of connection that will allow them to risk action.

A lived example of working through will, perhaps, be useful. In the spirit of self-reflective teaching research, I will return to my relationship with Angela. She came to the McNair office a few weeks after the attendance discussion, very concerned about completing an important assignment for a literary theory class. In a time bind, and having difficulty understanding what was required for the paper, her intent in coming to the office was to tell me she thought she might fail the class. After meeting with the professor, she was at a loss with his direction to, "Wallow in your research." I, too, found this a wholly inadequate –and academically arrogant-- response to a student's request for clarification.

Angela planned to analyze a Sandra Cisneros novel the class had read; she had ideas about metaphors to trace through the book, but only a handful of outside references, and little grasp of how to apply theory to a piece of literature. Even though I am not an English professor, and it was not my classroom, I stepped in, fearful of bungling and causing academic harm. But the professor had distanced himself from Angela—a common response to discomfort with racial difference—so it seemed up to me to try to respond. I held Biesta and Oliver in mind, and-- however clumsily-- I decided to test my ideas about witnessing and mentorship. I tried to be vigilant. Before speaking, I took stock of the power differentials between us, and I made an effort to construct my response bearing this in mind. Without seeing it as the totality of Angela's subjectivity—in other words, remembering the mystery of Angela, what is beyond recognition-- I took what I knew of her subject position as a nontraditional Latina student, the history that

implied, and the experiences she has likely had in higher education. I had a hunch that her purported lack of understanding very likely had a deep connection to the whiteness of the curriculum and was exacerbated by the professor's inability to be responsive and provide academic direction. This seems ironic given that Angela had told me on an earlier occasion how meaningful she had found the book, but it also seems an apt example of Lugones' admonition that reading such books must be done from an engaged position. The professor was clearly not doing so.

I discerned that Angela was being asked to use Eurocentric theoretical methods to analyze Chicana literature, and that the approach was not working for her. I hesitated—I gave some thought and attention to the context of her learning and her distress. Considering her experiences in a Eurocentric department on a predominantly white campus, I gambled that she had not yet been exposed to Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/* La Frontera. I asked if she knew this work. Angela replied that she had found a couple of references to Anzaldúa, but they were not extensive, and they did not make sense to her. I handed her my copy of the book, telling her to read a chapter or two and let me know what she thought. I briefly explained the term epistemology, and I told her I thought she would see how to take key concepts from Borderlands theory to analyze the metaphor she had chosen. I ventured that she would probably need to limit the variations on the metaphor she had chosen so that she could explore them in more depth, and I expressed confidence she would understand the theory she would soon be reading. I tried to give enough direction that perhaps she could return to the professor with another way "in" to a conversation with him that he would be better able to respond to.

In my exchange with Angela, I consciously made an effort to look at what was beyond recognition. I tried to perform: to be vigilant in my analysis, alert to all the levels of our interaction, especially to my investment as McNair director in Angela's classroom performance, and to the academic problem that was presenting itself. Simultaneously, I tried to maintain awareness that my own subjectivity as a mentor was at stake in my response. I attempted to bear witness to the best of my ability, to maintain a sense of connection, and to look at her with loving eyes. Similar to the writing center tutors, my intent was to respond in such a way that possibilities would open for her to create her own meaning in this particular academic situation. I did not define Angela by the narratives surrounding her confusion: the tears and worry she would fail, that perhaps she should not be a McNair Scholar; the difficulty she experienced trying to understand the vague instructions given by her white male professor was asking. "Maybe I shouldn't be an English major," she said. I did not accept this at face value, but tried to offer another path, one I hoped would demonstrate responsiveness. I wanted to look beyond recognizing her as an upset nontraditional Latina student running into an obstacle while studying literature, and I thought that perhaps her meaning making was being controlled by the Eurocentric methods of the English curriculum. [In a later discussion, I discovered this was indeed accurate.] I responded by offering information that I hoped would transform her experience, and allow her to be the creator of her own meaning. This, in turn, might hold the possibility of bringing a new point of view to the professor and—because she had to do a presentation related to her project-- to the entire class. Several days after loaning her the book, I recalled the importance of self-reflection in witnessing. I sent an email to check on Angela in an effort to determine whether it had been helpful.

She replied, “I had an explosion after reading the first chapter. The book has helped a lot with my project.” Even a mentor who is not familiar with Anzaldúa would have been able to witness in this fashion, although it might have taken a bit longer to reach the same point. It might have involved doing some research together in library databases, or more probing questions about the assignment and Angela’s thoughts.

I do not wish to imply that every interaction with students will be this laden with meaning, nor do mentors need to consider their interactions with students as constitutive of their entire sense of subjectivity. But my sense of myself as a teacher, mentor, and the type of person I wish to be rests on my ability to witness when mentoring events like this arise. Angela’s distress called a witnessing approach out of me. When such events happen, a mentor’s role is to support the student in bearing witness to and transforming a hurtful legacy, no matter what the subject area. Surely, I often fail to meet the standards I hope to meet, but I can try. It is not easy to help students negotiate university curricula and systems that have “othered,” objectified, and excluded them, while allowing our own subjectivity to be constituted in this process. As Kelly Oliver writes, “subjectivity is a responsiveness to otherness and vigilance is a movement beyond ourselves toward otherness.”[81] Vigilance is required in our effort to maintain connection with others, rather than to see ourselves as separate beings vying for recognition from one another. If mentors can be vigilant in learning to see their subjectivity as dependent upon their ability to respond to others, the promise of Oliver’s work is that they will then be able to transform their relationships with protégés in ways that can lead to more responsive mentorship.

[81]Ibid., 135.

Zygmunt Bauman might say that witnessing is a postmodern approach to others, and that it contributes to the "re-enchantment of the world."[82] In postmodernity,

> [th]ere are no hard-and-fast principles which one can learn, memorize, and deploy in order to escape situations without a good outcome…Human reality is messy and ambiguous—and so moral decisions, unlike abstract ethical principles, are ambivalent. It is in this sort of world that we must live; and yet, as if defying the worried philosophers who cannot conceive of … a morality without foundations, we demonstrate day by day that we can live, or learn to live, or manage to live in such a world…. [83]

As educators attempting to remedy historical wrongs and to bring new life to the academy, we do so in the messy human reality of the university. Witnessing provides a direction and a reason to persevere in this work, in spite of human foibles and idiosyncrasies. It invites us to move past an alienating notion of the other as a mystery; it is no longer an idea that paralyzes our ability to respond. We learn to live with mystery as part of what it means to relate to others. Bauman would have us embrace it.

> The postmodern world is one in which *mystery* is no more a barely tolerated alien awaiting a deportation order....We learn to live with events and acts [and people] that are not only not-yet-explained, but (for all we know about what we will ever know) inexplicable. Some of us would even say that it is such events and acts that constitute the hard, irremovable core of the human predicament. We learn again to respect ambiguity, to feel regard for human emotions, to appreciate actions without purpose and calculable rewards.[84]

Mystery is one way we can conceive of what is "beyond recognition," but in the day-to-day world of mentoring outsiders into the academy, it is helpful to have a concept of recognition to use in relationships with students.

> To recognize others requires acknowledging that their experiences are real even though they may be incomprehensible to us; this means that we must recognize that not everything that is real is recognizable to us. Acknowledging the realness of another's life is not judging its worth, or

[82] Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, 33.
[83] Ibid., 32.
[84] Ibid., 33.

> conferring respect, or understanding or recognizing it, but responding a way that affirms response-ability. We are obligated to respond to what is beyond our comprehension, beyond recognition, because ethics is possible only beyond recognition.[85]

This is mystery without alienation. When we accept mystery, and learn to see our connection to others, we can begin the process of responding and working-through. We are lifted out of the need for an "us-versus-them approach to the relation between self and other."[86] Connection is not the same as recognition; in connection, the other retains her mystery. But if we are connected with others, we can better accept the necessity for "an ethics of difference that thrives on the adventure of otherness."[87] For Oliver, this means we adopt an ethic of love, and that we practice vigilance in performing all the aspects of working-through. Connection is basic to our subjectivity and also to a pedagogy capable of moving into the community of strangers.

[85] Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 106.
[86] Ibid., 76.
[87] Ibid., 20.

CHAPTER 5

TOWARD MUTUALITY IN MENTORSHIP

> In his "Letter to North American Teachers" Paulo Freire writes,
>
> …since education is by nature social, historical, and political, there is no way we can talk about some universal, unchanging role for the teacher. …It is my basic conviction that a teacher must be fully cognizant of the political nature of his/her practice and assume responsibility for this rather than denying it.[1]

The same can be said for mentors, of course. Although I cannot talk about a universal, unchanging role for mentors, I hope to point toward some habits of mind and practice that will enable them to create their own transformative practice and open possibilities for witnessing relationships with protégés. Mentors who accept this responsibility can envision their work around the major themes of the last two chapters: the mystery of the other, connection with the other despite differences, and an idea of subjectivity founded on witnessing, carried out with vigilance and an ethic of love. I have started to trace the outlines of mentorship based on these concepts; however, more suggestions are needed to promote egalitarian, responsive mentorship that has the possibility to transform the academy. The risk is that any practices I describe might be construed as techniques and procedures for witnessing-- that witnessing might become a postmodern version of Johnson's mentorship. This is neither a possible nor desirable goal. It would be

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[1] Paulo Freire, "Letter to North American Teachers," in *Freire for the Classroom*, ed. Ira Shor, First ed. (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/ Cook Publishers, 1987), 211.

"inadequate for operating in the fluid, unpredictable, give-and-take atmosphere"[2] of mentorship conceived as a witnessing relationship, which is far more complex, and holds far more promise for powerful interactions than any technique could produce.

It is not an easy thing I ask: for mentors to create new knowledge with students while they simultaneously teach knowledge and practices protégés need for academic success-- knowledge that originated with those who excluded their parents and grandparents from the intellectual conversation. Further complicating a mentor's work is the fear a student may feel when interacting with her, and the "experience of fear is distorted when connections are not safe."[3] Students whose educational experiences have often been alienating and negative will rightfully be reticent to believe that connection with a mentor is safe. Negotiating this terrain demands awareness of the multiple ways in which students experience the hierarchical and exclusionary structures and practices of the university as well as mentors' own collusion with these. For the mentor to be a "'safe enough' person, she must be clear about her responsiveness and clear about the limits of her ability to respond."[4] When this tightrope is successfully walked, however, we have a chance to witness across difference, and the relational and academic rewards can be rich.

I shy away from developing a "witnessing protocol," but it is worthwhile to seek signposts to practice from fields that can inform mentorship. There are ways to enter more deeply into relationship with students that will allow mentors to disrupt the rational community and engage in the work of creating new knowledge with them, something I

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[2] Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood, "The Tutoring Process: Exploring Paradigms and Practices," in *The St. Martin Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*, eds. Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood, Third ed. (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2008), 2.
[3] Judith V. Jordan, "Commitment to Connection in a Culture of Fear," *Women & Therapy* 31, no. 2 (September 30, 2008), 236.
[4] Ibid., 246.

hope both would regard with relish. Paying attention to hunches, as I did with Angela, is a beginning. But useful examples to guide mentors in their interactions exist in at least two distinct contexts: the feminist counseling approach of relational cultural theory (RCT) and the more recent pedagogies practiced in university writing centers. These domains offer relational practices based on connection, egalitarianism within asymmetrical power contexts, and a commitment to transform dominant norms. On the structural level, both counselors and tutors work in one-on-one settings. But there is academic depth to the comparison as well, especially with regard to writing centers. Like research methods and practice, writing conventions can serve to exclude students who have been marginalized in the university. In consonance with Biesta, Nancy Grimm asserts that writing is not a "neutral, value-free activity;"[5] it is "embedded in complex ideological social systems, systems that often use literacy to classify and to exclude."[6] Mike Rose would, without question, agree with this statement.[7] If mentors choose to base their work on an ethic of loving interconnection, they face challenges because the context of their work does not promote connection: quite the opposite. The academy is a setting that emphasizes individual achievement and is often quite competitive. Disturbing the waters even further are the historic and political situatedness of both mentor and protégé that I have previously discussed. The resulting race and class divisions have the potential to compound individualization, and increase the likelihood that mentors may distance themselves from protégés. Angela's professor was an example of this dynamic. Mentor and protégé carry their asymmetrical positions with them at all times; in constructing a

[5] Nancy Grimm, "Contesting "The Idea of a Writing Center": The Politics of Writing Center Research," *The Writing Lab Newsletter* 17, no. 1 (September 1992), 5.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Rose, *The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University*.

new vision of mentorship through the work of Biesta and Oliver, I am, therefore, asking for relationship in a nonrelational world.[8] To build relationships in an alienating world, mentors will need to work against the grain from time to time. They will need to seek ways to mentor that most likely eclipse the mentoring they themselves received. In this chapter, I hope to weave together the work done in RCT and writing centers, shedding some light on ideas that mentors might appropriate for their practice. Kathy Kram named four stages to mentorship,[9] but I would like to use only the three offered by writing center pedagogy.[10] In the McNair context, they would be pre-research, research, and post-research. These phases are not perfect. They blur at the edges, but they do provide a starting point. I will offer a model of mentorship based on the exchanges between McNair Scholar and mentor as they work together across time in these three stages; this is not to describe all such relationships, but a first effort toward reconceptualizing mentoring. I hope that the practices and attitudes I outline can be transferred to other mentoring contexts.

Prelude to the Research Mentorship

What are the prerequisites to building knowledge together in the research process? The pre-research phase concerns creating a relationship with the protégé, one that allows the student to sense the mentor's openness and receptivity to the student's experience and ideas. I begin with the mentoring relationship itself, although it must be noted that this will usually grow out of a meaningful classroom relationship. McNair Scholars gravitate toward professors with whom they have felt a good classroom

[8] Linda Hartling and Elizabeth Sparks, "Relational-Cultural Practice: Working in a Nonrelational World," *Women & Therapy* 31, no. 2-4 (2008).
[9] Kram, *Phases of the Mentor Relationship*.
[10] Murphy and Sherwood, *The Tutoring Process: Exploring Paradigms and Practices*.

connection. I encourage students to seek relationships with faculty they feel have engaged with them on both academic and emotional levels. Who values their relationship with you and will give you their time and attention? Who will teach you what you need to know, but will understand your point of view and personal experience? Students usually choose mentors they feel respect and appreciate their questions and classroom contributions, including those that arise from their outsider status. Yet, they may still feel a certain reserve, unsure about approaching the professor to ask about deepening the existing relationship into a mentorship. Because of this dynamic, it is good for the mentor to take the first steps toward witnessing even before the mentoring relationship starts. Doing so requires that the mentor signal to the student, encouraging the protégé to address her. At this stage, mentors try to open the possibility for the student to address the mentor (as Oliver would mean the word), so the student needs to believe the professor is receptive to her. Although a mentor cannot control the outcome of opening to the student, a receptive, inquiry stance begins when she makes a conscious, political (and loving) decision to try to create a space for something new to arise in her relationship with the protégé. Verbal signals are also helpful. Mentors create relational openings by what they say—when they ask for a student's opinion or start discussions that seek common ground, mentors invite students into the pedagogical relationship.

Several important concepts that align with the philosophical position I have articulated need to be emphasized as part of the decision to create relational openings. First is the cultural context of all relations, an understanding that I have shown is vital to the social, historical, and political situatedness of any McNair mentoring relationship.

> To place culture, alongside connection, at the center of [the relationship] is to break a critical silence. First, it acknowledges that social and political

> values inform theories of human psychology [and pedagogy], including those that valorize separation and autonomy. [The mentor recognizes] that to feign value neutrality is to perpetuate the distortions of the stratified culture in rather predictable ways.[11]

Judith Jordan's words for RCT therapists resonate with my call for mentors to be mindful of exclusionary histories and obstacles that confront students. Social and political histories, cultural values, and agendas permeate the university; teaching, scholarship, and mentoring are not value neutral. Mentors need to expand their focus beyond academic performance; their work demands awareness on multiple levels. They must guard against giving protégés the impression that they are committed to the asymmetrical power relations that have excluded underrepresented students from higher education. For example, it reveals a stunning lack of awareness when a professor asks a group that includes a Chicana student, "What was it like to work with 'the other' in your educational service project?" The student's background was quite similar to the students the group had tutored: she *was* "the other." Similar troubles exist in classrooms where the colonialism of the literary canon is not called into question; when students of color must participate in Eurocentric discussions of works such as *Gulliver's Travels,* it puts them in a difficult position. Reading white male interpretations of violence against Mexican women in social science classes creates a similar problem. Mentors who understand that cultural values are infused throughout the curriculum are better prepared to respond to cultural differences and to question such practices. As part of understanding academic stratification, mentors recognize that the power differentials that lie between them and their students are exacerbated by exclusionary histories that have othered their students. And they can try to stay connected to students across differences by calling academic

[11] Judith V. Jordan, Linda M. Hartling and Maureen Walker, *The Complexity of Connection: Writings from the Stone Center's Jean Baker Miller Training Institute* (New York: Guilford Press, 2004), 4.

norms and expectations into question. If *Gulliver's Travels* must be read by English majors, they can promote discussion that problematizes representations of otherness. Even if students are not comfortable enough to volunteer to speak during class, professors can welcome written work that challenges the status quo. Academic receptiveness of this nature is often a precursor to mentorship. Mystery guides the mentorship when professors realize that they cannot understand how social, cultural, and historical differences affect their students. The protégé's experience is beyond recognition, and therefore relational curiosity –a receptive attitude, not a prying one—is a prerequisite for creating something new together. In mentorship, relational curiosity goes hand in hand with academic curiosity: the protégé brings something new, unseen, something to which the mentor must respond in a way that opens the possibility for the protégé's response in return.

Establishing a responsive context will move the relationship toward mutuality and away from the hierarchical practices of the academy. To nurture mutuality, mentors should be willing to change their practices based on input from their protégés. Once approached by a student to begin a research mentorship, mentors can explicitly state this position. In the pre-research phase, this is, perhaps, easier to accomplish. There is generally an academic give and take over the course of several appointments in which mentor and protégé discuss possible ideas for the research project. At this point, mentors can cultivate more egalitarian methods. The questions they ask are a wise place to start. Meg Woolbright references Amy Shapiro's thoughts on asking questions in the feminist classroom community. In reading the following passage, think of the "community" as the relationship between mentor and protégé.

> [O]ne of the ways that a sense of community is formed is through the types of questions that the teacher/tutor asks. Community breaks down

> when individuals ask "preset questions, questions that they already know the answers to, questions designed not to build trust and share understandings, but to challenge and exhibit power."[12]

Kelly Oliver would say that preset questions foreclose possibilities for the student to respond; being vigilant to reflect on the questions they ask and the true intent of those questions is a habit of mind transformative mentors will seek to develop. Even if a mentor is not trying to challenge and exhibit power, she might be leading the dialogue in a way that forecloses possibilities for the protégé's response. Mentors can consider new questions. Who holds the power in this relationship, and how is that power used?

> Are we…interested in what the student has to say, or are we too quick to announce our opinions? Are we acting as collaborators or authority figures? Do our comments invite responses and show respect for student's ideas, or do they foreclose further interaction and leave the student feeling intimidated?[13]

These questions begin in the pre-research stage, but they should be asked through the research process. They help mentors develop a self-reflective practice and find pathways to relationship across difference that allow them to share power and authority with the protégé, setting a cooperative tone of "power-in-connection" rather than one of "power over" the student.[14] The aim is for the mentors to learn something about the students' ideas so that they can continue to support them through the research process. Protégé means "protected" in French; protecting and nurturing students' ideas as well as their career aspirations is essential. As they travel through the academy, the forces of assimilation are strong. A mentor who remembers the ideas a student brought with her, and who reminds her of these, honors her unique position and contributions. When

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[12] Meg Woolbright, "The Politics of Tutoring: Feminism within the Patriarchy," in *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*, eds. Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood, Third ed. (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2008), 73.
[13] Murphy and Sherwood, *The Tutoring Process: Exploring Paradigms and Practices*, 10.
[14] Jean Baker Miller, "Telling the Truth about Power," *Women & Therapy* 31, no. 2-4 (2008).

Gregory Cajete found a program that encouraged his unique understanding of indigenous science, he was able to carry it through the traditional doctoral research process. Surely his advisors and mentors remembered and honored the ideas he brought with him.

As mentor and protégé work toward a well-defined project and a research proposal, there are academic standards and tools the mentor will teach. Students usually have big ideas and want to take on far more than they can accomplish in a two-month summer project. Guiding discussions to help narrow the focus is an important mentoring task at this point. Further, the outsider student may not come to the project with the traditional theoretical knowledge others may already have. Without foreclosing the student's opportunities for response, or taking over the direction of the line of inquiry, a mentor might offer certain readings or brief explanations that complement a student's initial ideas, filling in "gaps" in theoretical knowledge that others might expect her to know. Shaping a proposal together, a mentor responds to the student's ideas, teaching her how to put new content into existing academic forms. I acknowledge that this process is harder, perhaps, in the natural sciences, where an apprenticeship mentoring model still dominates; the same is often true in the social sciences. Students will frequently take up a piece of a mentor's ongoing project through which they learn laboratory procedures and research methods that follow disciplinary norms. Even so, their interests can be included by assisting them to answer the questions they might ask that are driven by their outsider status, such as the McNair Latina who learned how to conduct an Implicit Association Task experiment measuring discrimination against the Latina/o community. Her research proposal followed disciplinary norms, but forged into new territory guided by her personal experience; her project was informed by her social and historical position.

A relationship that shares power in the pre-research phase will set the scene for co-constructing the more formal phase of the relationship. Although the mentor is inherently in a more powerful academic position, she can explicitly question the authority this gives her, indicating to the protégé her uneasiness with hierarchical relationships. To act on this position, the mentor can work out an agreement with her protégé about the weekly research goals and the number of weekly meetings, allowing the student to share in the power of structuring the relationship from the outset.[15] Mentors must also indicate that any agreement can be altered when needed, again offering to share relational power; both the structure and content of the research process are fluid. As they move toward the research project itself, mentors will want to take care to respond to email and phone messages from the protégé. Although this does not mean mentors must drop their own work, or be completely available to students, protégés who do not have easy access to their mentors can become discouraged. If they have questions or need guidance, the responsive mentor will answer, if only to calm the waters by setting an appointment at a mutually convenient time. This might seem to be an obvious component of responsiveness, but in my experience, it is something that often troubles mentor/ protégé relationships.

Tsedal Beyene and her co-authors[16] deepen our understanding of relational mutuality and egalitarian relationships in mentoring. The participants in their mentoring study were, like McNair Scholars, undergraduates of diverse backgrounds who were being mentored through their college experience. The study examined how mentorship could move from instrumental activities, such as we find in Johnson's approach to

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Tsedal Beyene, Marjorie Anglin and William Sanchez, "Mentoring and Relational Mutuality: Proteges' Perspectives." *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development* Vol. 41 (2002).

mentorship, toward interactional processes such as those I ask mentors to seek. Most of the research participants explicitly stated that their relationships with mentors were not hierarchies; one important characteristic of these more egalitarian relationships went beyond bringing their own ideas into the research project. These students also expressed a sense of freedom to challenge the mentor's ideas. Relatedly, the students felt that mutual learning was a critical part of working with their mentors. Working with their mentors became a mutually co-created intellectual path. Friendship was also important to the students, and they "perceived their relationship as one that also [gave] something to the mentor;[17] they were not involved in one-way advising-type relationships. This seems like a first cue for mentors who work across difference: they can establish a tone of mutuality and respect, making explicitly clear to protégés that they do not see themselves in a more powerful position. Rather, they are open to being challenged, and they expect to learn from and be changed by the relationship.

Moving into the Research Process

RCT offers indications of how we might turn toward transformative practices during the research process. It asks us to participate in "growth-fostering relationships,"[18] which are highly consonant with the elements of witnessing. In asymmetrical power relationships, it is the responsibility of the one with more power to create a context for fostering growth. This tenet aligns well with Oliver's idea that we need to respond to others in ways that open possibilities for them to respond in turn—the infinite responsibility of Lévinas. In a vital theoretical position that aligns with witnessing, RCT

[17] Ibid., 97.
[18] Judith V. Jordan, "Toward Competence and Connection," in *The Complexity of Connection*, eds. Judith V. Jordan, Maureen Walker and Linda M. Hartling (New York: Guilford Press, 2004).

calls for practitioners to accept that our fundamental relationship with others is one of connection, rather than separation. Judith Jordan writes, there is "primary energy that flows toward others, toward joining with others in an expansive sense of interconnectedness. In contrast, the separate-self paradigm would suggest separation and disconnection is the primary state of affairs…."[19] She further states that the separate self cannot

> …encompass complexity. By embracing a model of personhood that celebrates our interconnectedness, our need for each other, and our unending and inevitable vulnerability, we can see that the interests of other and oneself are far more intertwined than our prevailing psychological theories and social philosophies would lead us to believe."[20]

Here witnessing is envisioned in the relationship between therapist and client, and it is in clear alignment with a philosophy of mentoring founded on loving interconnection and witnessing relationships. Mentors who embrace RCT's theoretical emphasis on the primacy of connection, interdependence, and cultural context understand that this is the ground from which academic complexity and creativity arise. In practice, mentors might sometimes need to suspend ideas they feel certain about: the Chicana scholar's mentor felt certain she needed a white comparison group for her study. If he had let go of this belief, and accepted the complexity of his connection with her, what might have been the outcome?

RCT delineates the qualities of a relationship that fosters growth, and these provide a helpful framework for mentors involved in a research practice with students: movement toward mutuality; an ability to notice and care about our impact on others;

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[19] Judith V. Jordan, "Relational Awareness: Transforming Disconnection," in *The Complexity of Connection*, eds. Judith V. Jordan, Maureen Walker and Linda M. Hartling (New York: Guilford Press, 2004), 47.
[20] Jordan, *Commitment to Connection in a Culture of Fear*, 251.

openness to being influenced; relational curiosity; an understanding that vulnerability is inevitable and a place of potential growth rather than danger; creating connection rather than exercising power over others.[21] RCT theorists also help us to better understand how we know we are in a growth-fostering or witnessing relationship. Each person: feels greater vitality; is more able to act in the world (and does act); has a more accurate picture of herself; feels a greater sense of self-worth; and feels more connected to others. These words could describe transformative mentorship, in which mentor and protégé find vitality and self-worth in their growing academic and personal connection. They are able to act in the (academic) world—mentors move forward as academic guides, and students enter more deeply into the research process, asking questions, or analyzing and presenting results. Mentors might even develop new research interests of their own as they learn from their protégés. If a mentorship fosters growth, it is intellectually dynamic and academically challenging; in their exchanges, both mentor and protégé are vulnerable because this is how we grow intellectually. By contrast, a successful mentorship in Johnson's eyes would rest on the degree to which a protégé learns and acts upon the professional traits the mentor values. The growth-fostering mentor aligns herself with the student and willingly enters into an academic conversation that is not, perhaps, her expertise. Guided by conversations with her protégé, the mentor moves toward mutuality. Respectful academic curiosity on the mentor's part can lead both into new territory. The mentor is open to being influenced; she values connection with the student more than exercising the power to create a young scholar in her image.

On the other hand, troubled relationships with students certainly leave one with the opposite set of feelings: mentors who are not fostering growth are often stymied as to

[21] Jordan, *Toward Competence and Connection.*

how they should relate to their students; the relationship lacks vitality and connection. I have also seen the effect mentors who do not foster growth have on students: bright young scholars who question their abilities, who feel demoralized and unworthy to apply to graduate school. Research mentors who are slow to respond when a student contacts them, or whose feedback on a student's ideas is harsh, often have this effect on students. Students in these situations experience difficult times when they feel little connection to their mentors. They can become nearly paralyzed when trying to write or discuss their research. In these cases, I certainly wondered if the mentors were aware of their impact on the students, and if so, did they care? Such moments of disconnection let mentors know that they are off track, that they are no longer in a growth-fostering relationship.

Nancy Welch's work with Margie in the writing center reveals how a mentor might move toward a growth-fostering relationship. I choose this example because Welch overcame the obstacles presented by the differences between them, and this is perhaps an even more difficult relational circumstance than many mentors will have. When she first started working with Margie, Welch felt constrained by Margie's history with sexual harassment; she was concerned she might ask painful or intrusive questions. Ultimately, Welch felt "confused and shut out by [Margie's] writing."[22] Margie, too, was nervous, and worried about the many competing voices in her head; she was concerned about the testimony she was scheduled to give to the state legislature, and the "many requests and demands for her to speak and write."[23] Neither had the vitality to perform their work in the world, or a sense of connection with one another. But, over the course of their meetings, Welch struggled to encourage a growth-fostering relationship. She valued

[22] Welch, *From Silence to Noise: The Writing Center as Critical Exile*, 7.
[23] Ibid., 9.

mutuality; she noticed and cared about her impact her on Margie and did not want to dominate their exchanges. We have already seen Welch was open to being influenced: she was more interested in helping Margie develop her own text rather than Welch's vision of the Ideal Text. Supporting Margie while she wrote her text involved relational curiosity and the ability to create and sustain a connection. Over the course of their meetings, Welch developed her connection with Margie while she assumed a new pedagogical stance. It was a hard task. She writes, "I [came] to see my role in our relationship as encouraging multiple readings, multiple ways of becoming strangers to that socio-symbolic contract that would fix and limit her meanings. This role isn't an easy one for me to stay in, though…." Together, they created a process of

> …composing as a process of both collaborating with and being a stranger to one's own words. [Margie] writes, reads silently, glosses her writing in the margins, writes, reads aloud to me, glosses, writes again.…I resist asking questions beyond, 'What stands out for you?' or 'What do you think/' though this restraint asks me to exile myself from the kind of writing teacher I always thought was the right kind—one who asks a lot of questions.[24]

Welch resisted her academic training, and her work with Margie became an intersubjective dance in which their subjectivities were constituted through their relationship. They were vulnerable to one another. Margie grew as a writer and developed more academic confidence. She became a woman who spoke to large groups about sexual harassment in the workplace. Welch, always questioning her techniques and her relationship, took a step back from her cherished ideas of the "right kind" of teacher; she allowed herself to be pulled up short. She remained aware of the balance of contributions to the writing. Margie's contributions and authorship were of paramount importance to Welch. She also cared about her impact on Margie, and grew

[24] Ibid.

professionally through allowing herself to be challenged by the demands of the relationship. Welch learned about herself through her relation to Margie; she witnessed.

Welch did not simply fix Margie's text, or ask leading questions that would provoke a particular response. Indeed, we have already seen the questions mentors ask of students can reveal a great deal about their intent, if they take the time to examine them. Questions are not always asked with innocent hope of collaboration, and Andrea Lunsford rightly notes that "collaboration often masquerades as democracy when it in fact practices the same old authoritarian control."[25] Mentors ought to be wary of falling into this type of false egalitarianism. It is true they relate to their students within a context of power imbalances, and complete egalitarianism is therefore elusive. But in mentoring, RCT asks the person who holds more power to work toward fostering growth and moving toward egalitarianism to the best of her ability. For this reason, mentors must continue to be mindful of the ways in which questions can lead a student. If they lead away from protecting and nurturing the student's ideas and text, they become a form of control. Questions can be used to

> …reproduce the status quo; the rigid hierarchy of teacher-centered classrooms is replicated in the [protégé]-centered [mentorship] in which the [mentor] is still the seat of all authority but is simply pretending it isn't so. Such a pretense of democracy sends badly mixed messages. It can also lead to the kind of homogeneity that squelches diversity, that waters down ideas to the lowest common denominator, that erases rather than values difference.[26]

When Welch resisted urges to fix Margie's paper and to ask questions that would lead to the "Ideal Text" she imagined, she understood these would be forms of control and not

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[25] Andrea Lunsford, "Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center," in *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*, eds. Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood, Third ed. (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2008), 48.
[26] Ibid., 50.

true collaboration. Mentors can easily slide into more directive academic roles such as this.

Mentors who seek growth-fostering relationships may find they become hard to cultivate sometimes. This can be due to the fact that mentors operate in situations where they are "academic colonizers";[27] they are on shifting ground and relationships become complicated. In a helpful move for mentors, Nancy Grimm invokes the idea of the writing center as a contact zone, a concept Mary Louise Pratt defines as a "social [space] where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today."[28] I have discussed how the colonial past echoes in the university; it is indeed a contact zone between marginalized students and the dominant culture. Nancy Welch's work with Margie took place within a contact zone. Pratt eventually uses the term to "reconsider the [normalizing] models of community that many of us rely on in teaching and theorizing."[29] For example, we do not easily form a coherent "community of classroom learners" with a common discourse, nor should this necessarily be our goal because it has a falsely unifying and normalizing function. The idea of the McNair research mentorship as a contact zone meshes happily with the community of strangers. A contact zone is a space where mentor and protégé acknowledge the asymmetrical power context of their relationship, and realize that as part of their work together, they may well experience culture clashes. They should expect to struggle through their different world views to arrive at a co-constructed meaning, but this process will challenge the status quo of the rational community. They may have

[27] Hurtado, *The Campus Racial Climate: Contexts of Conflict*.
[28] Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* 91 (1991), 34.
[29] Ibid.

different epistemological and cultural backgrounds and biases, and they may seek different types of knowledge in their work outside of the mentoring relationship. But within it, they can work toward mutuality. This does not mean the mentor necessarily agrees with a student's position, but the mentor stands behind the protégé as she articulates ideas which are consonant with her own worldview and experience. Grimm writes, "Thinking of writing centers as linguistic contact zones would politicize our research. It should encourage us to think about how we constitute one another relationally in language and how we deal with difference."[30] Contact zones are also sites where "different discourses grapple with each other and are negotiated."[31] I would like to suggest that curricular and research contact zones also exist, and these are places where we "constitute one another relationally." Mentors who conceive of their practice as a contact zone have a practical framework to sustain their political commitment to move beyond domination. As we constitute one another relationally, we enter the community of strangers.

Grimm also describes writing centers as places "where students struggle to connect their public and private lives, and where they learn that success in the academy depends on uncovering and understanding tacit differences in value systems and expectations."[32] These struggles also define the work mentors and protégés do in the contact zone. Grimm's words might describe the situation in which McNair Scholars find themselves when confronted with curriculum and research practices that exclude them or deny their experiences. Research projects can certainly become sites of struggle between

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[30] Grimm, *Contesting The Idea of a Writing Center": The Politics of Writing Center Research*, 6.
[31] Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski, "Postcolonialism and the Idea of a Writing Center," in *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*, Third ed. (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2008), 81.
[32] Grimm, *Contesting "The Idea of a Writing Center": The Politics of Writing Center Research*, 5.

public and private lives, and students learn that academic success involves learning ways of thinking and expressing themselves that may seem foreign, or at odds with their home values. Mentors can assist students in learning to express the private in public speech. But students whose private and public lives intersect in the research project make themselves vulnerable, and mentors from more dominant groups must tread carefully when helping students design or carry out projects that call the status quo into question. In many circumstances, when mentors criticize the status quo it can offer openings for the protégé to respond with views she might otherwise have been fearful to present, thinking they could push the mentor away.

Throughout the research process, mentors guide by asking questions, offering insights or suggestions. But even with those mentors who strive for egalitarianism, who try not to dominate the conversation, students may perceive questions they might ask as threatening, or denigrating to their ideas. This is especially true when students are asked to explain research that is based on their outsider status. I argue that such tensions arise from the microaggressions students have experienced in our educational system, and are the logical result of the colonizing project of traditional education. Students must hear such questions, because they need to be prepared for similar questioning by others. Yet mentors need to explain why they ask, and place questions in context for the student. It is mentors' responsibility to make clear they accept students' ideas, but that their aim is to help students sharpen their expression. Mentors might say they are playing devil's advocate, trying to take the position of someone who may disagree with the protégé. Plainly stating it is not the mentor's own opinion, she can ask questions as if she is someone who might misunderstand or disparage the student's research. For example,

when students present their research results at a conference, they will need to explain and defend their work, or deflect questions, without becoming defensive. At multidisciplinary venues, such as a McNair research conference, a student of color may be asked by a biology student or professor to explain Critical Race Theory as a research lens. The questioner is unfamiliar with the vocabulary and wonders what race might have to do with a project on the sociology of higher education. A student who has been prepared for this occasion is in a better position to give a well thought out reply that will be well received by the questioner, and the research will be more likely to have the student's desired effect on the broader academic conversation. This is, however, another instance in which mentors will do well to be mindful of the questions they ask as they prepare students for such discussions. Do our comments invite a response from the student? Or do they alienate and reproduce hierarchical norms?

I have said mentors have a responsibility to teach the academic norms and processes that they hope to disrupt; preparing students for conferences or teaching them how to write a research paper is part of this responsibility. If a protégé is to be successful in the academy, there are field-specific norms and expectations she must learn, as well as standards of academic rigor she must attain. Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski offer insights into this conundrum in their essay, "Postcolonialism and the Idea of a Writing Center." In consonance with the idea of a contact zone, they propose a pedagogical "strategy in which…students…marginalized by race, class, and ethnicity, are encouraged to adopt critical consciousness as a means of functioning with the university and its discourses."[33] They acknowledge that academic discourses force marginalized

[33] Bawarshi and Pelkowski, *Postcolonialism and the Idea of a Writing Center*, 82.

students to adopt "subject positions and habits of mind"[34] that acculturate them into the university, and that there are consequences for them: they are changed, and their relationship to their home cultures is changed in the process. Bawarshi and Pelkowski develop a pedagogy that helps students

> become aware of how and why academic discourses situate them within certain power relationships and require of them particular subject positions. The goal of such pedagogy is not to subvert academic discourse or to suggest that students reject it, but rather to teach students how self-consciously to use and be used by it—how rhetorically and critically to choose and construct their subject positions within it.[35]

These writing center theorists are critical of its traditional practices. They wish to make explicit to students that "learning to write better" has consequences; I argue that learning to research has similar consequences.

> [W]e need to question essentialist notions of writing as somehow ideologically innocent or even empowering—a means of translating thought into language. Such considerations ask us to take a closer look at what it means to teach standard academic discourses, and what is at stake when we introduce students to a particular academic style or genre or ritual. As such, they make us aware of the role writing plays in the construction of master narratives, narratives that define students' values, goals, and epistemologies, and that perpetuate power relationships and subject positions. There are serious political consequences, thus, to the kind of student transformations the writing center promises….[36]

Academic discourses—whether in writing or research-- are not only privileged, they reproduce the social and political conventions of the university. They perpetuate exclusionary systems. The authors cite Min-zhan Lu: when students who have been othered learn how to write more "successfully" in the writing center, their "'mastery of academic discourse is often accompanied by a change in… point of view,'"[37] which also

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 83.
[36] Ibid., 84-85.
[37] Ibid., 87.

changes how a student perceives and relates to the world. A change in style often involves a change in subject position, revealing a hidden consequence of this learning: it imposes "a subject position, a particular, politically embedded, and discursive way of experiencing and articulating knowledge and reality."[38] Without doubt, one could say the same for the research process. What subject position are students made to assume when they accept the role of researcher? When mentors teach their field specific methods? In many cases, it is still a nearly disembodied "objective" perspective that is purportedly free of value systems, an ideal that can never be achieved.

To call into question writing center practices that assimilate students, Bawarshi and Pelkowski assert writing center pedagogy should "make explicit how [different] discourses affect them-- how they rhetorically and socially function."[39] One way of doing so is to make students aware of "how mastery of academic discourses affects their home discourses."[40] Such a move seems difficult, but Bawarshi and Pelkowski offer concrete suggestions for teaching what is at stake when one discourse is privileged over another. They follow Derek, an African American "basic" writer. As his writing changes, his home cultural/ linguistic identity—his way of expressing himself-- is transformed.

> This might mean a tutor discusses with Derek those contradictions he has been asked to rhetorically smooth over in this restructuring.…[They] might compare the rhetorical strategies of the two texts…in order to reflect on the social and political effects such strategies create…. If Derek is not satisfied with the subject position he is working from in the revised essay, tutors might help find a revision strategy that would maintain the contradictions of his first draft, but be suitable to academic discourse. [41]

[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 90.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 90-91.

The goal of tutoring therefore becomes teaching students to understand their multiple subject positions and "become more aware of the power of discourse and what it means to 'write.'"[42] Students learn to situate themselves and their writing within conflicting discourses, and preserve their multiple roles. Research is a similar contested site. Gregory Cajete figured out how to navigate conflicting discourses and preserve his indigenous approach to science; it meant assessing his home culture's understanding of scientific knowledge and how that fit (or not) with Western science. He had to name the differences, track them, and then make decisions, self-consciously finding a place for himself within conflicting discourses. The result was *Look to the Mountain.*[43] Cajete had to do this for himself. But undergraduate research mentors can surely walk protégés through this process when it is necessary. They can become strangers[44] to their disciplinary norms by questioning how they construct the researcher's subjectivity. What is gained and what is lost when a student assumes a particular research method or epistemological stance? Like the tutors who might have worked with Derek to carefully compare two versions of his writing, mentors can take similar steps with their protégés. We can critique academic standards as we name them and teach them. We can allow ourselves to be constituted in our discussions with protégés, and so enter the community of strangers.

If we regard research as a contact zone, and become strangers to our disciplinary norms, the ways we mentor begin to undergo metamorphosis. The McNair program is located at multiple contact zones: between the university's teaching and research missions, between the mentor and protégé, between the mentor's disciplinary standards –

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[42] Ibid., 91.
[43] Cajete, *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education.*
[44] Welch, *From Silence to Noise: The Writing Center as Critical Exile*.

standards to which the protégé will be held accountable-- and the idea of witnessing. Its position makes McNair a site of possibility with the promise of transformation. As strangers to our work, we are outside looking in, and so there is more freedom for critiquing higher education as a whole. The idea is not to subvert the academy, but to allow

> …marginalized students to become aware of how and why academic discourses situate them within certain power relationships and require of the particular subject positions. The goal of such pedagogy is not to subvert academic discourse or to suggest that students reject it, but rather to teach students how self-consciously to use and be used by it—how rhetorically and critically to choose and construct their subject positions within it.[45]

When the goals of McNair research projects include troubling and creating new disciplinary knowledge, as well as knowledge about the research process itself, mentors shift toward transformative practices and projects.

Research Postlude

When the research process comes to a formal end, the mentor's role is not yet finished. Mentors need to look out for protégés; like Rose's high school and college teachers, they will look for the next steps students might take and guide them through the transitions. How can protégés carry their work forward? Mentoring at any level can ask this question, even though the next stage for the protégé might be a post-baccalaureate research internship, graduate school, or --for protégés who are already graduate students—the professoriate. Because an important objective of the McNair program is to help students apply to and enter graduate studies, as an example for other mentorship settings, I will focus on how mentors can help with this process. But the traits I highlight

[45] Bawarshi and Pelkowski, *Postcolonialism and the Idea of a Writing Center*, 83.

can be nurtured in any type or level of mentorship-- relational curiosity, listening to mystery, and support for the student's goals.

The timing of the McNair research project, before the fall semester of the student's senior year, means that it usually serves as a centerpiece for the graduate school application process. The scholarly work that students read during the proposal and research phases will guide their search for future graduate departments. We ask them to select graduate schools based on how they resonate with the research that is being done there. Which articles moved you most? Where do the authors teach? Are they still performing this type of research? These are the questions we want McNair Scholars to answer; they will lead them toward programs with which they are well-matched. It is my hope that mentors will remain with students through this stage of the McNair program. Their academic insights and connections always prove valuable. If a student attends a field-specific conference with her mentor, the mentor can make introductions to colleagues and teach the social expectations and norms of an academic conference. The mentor offers encouragement and support for the protégé's work. An especially important task in this phase of mentorship is writing the statement of purpose.

Statements of purpose for graduate school applications are documents weighted with importance. They can make the all the difference for students. Some fields allow for a student to include more of her personal story, but whether or not this is true, they always serve as an academic biography. In roughly 1000 words (sometimes less) a student must gracefully explain: her academic and research background and passions; what piqued her interest in these; her fit with the potential graduate department; what she hopes to learn in graduate school; and finally, what she will bring to the department. It is

a daunting task. And, yet more intimidating, the essay can function as an exclusionary technology of the rational community. In the McNair program, we begin with prompts for writing that draw a lot of information from the student, more than can possibly be used in the actual essay. Students are also asked to think of a "hook," a story to grab the reader. But it should be academic in nature, too. When they are ready to seek me out with a first or second draft, I sit with the student, discussing big picture questions. What narrative is being constructed? Does it tell your story in an academic style? Does it show your fit with the department you are applying to? Yet there are times when direct teaching is necessary. I have more than once found myself teaching the correct use of a semicolon to connect independent clauses. However, I teach punctuation in the service of the meaning and flow of the essay. This is part of what writing center pedagogy would call the process approach.

I always prefer to work as a team with the mentor in the statement-writing process because I do not know the expectations of each academic field. After students produce a complete early draft, I ask them to seek further guidance from their mentors, although this is meant to be a supplement to our own interactions, not a replacement. Some mentors distance themselves from this essential task of working with an undergraduate. Some take over the process, shaping a story that seems to supplant the student's. Neither of these options is a response that allows for the student to respond. Again, it is difficult terrain to walk with a protégé. A desire to "help" might turn into heavy-handed guidance; such a text is no longer truly the student's, and the student is left feeling inadequate. When they are accepted to a program, they may wonder if the selection committee was mistaken. However, some mentors are able to maintain their relational curiosity. They

listen to the student's voice on the page, and they remain open to being changed by the student's story. They look for the protégé's priorities, not their own: what does the protégé most value as an academic passion? What story does she wish to tell about herself? They support the student to seek out schools and departments that are wise "fits" for her, not merely a prominent institution that the mentor can wear as a badge: look where my protégé was accepted! Such a comment is actually a subtle way of reinforcing academic hierarchies and a troubled history; it places the mentor into the disturbing Pygmalion-like role that Johnson assumes. Yes, having faith in a student's abilities and supporting them through the application cycle is crucial. Johnson discusses having confidence in a protégé and I do not want to minimize its importance. However, transformative mentors must always remind themselves this is the student's career, not theirs. They are not necessarily cultivating future colleagues or cloning themselves academically. The task at hand is to align themselves with protégés, to assist them in coming into presence in all their uniqueness, while providing reassurance that they are capable. Continuing to spend time with protégés, listening closely, is key. Consider one mentor's discussion with a student. The protégé had broad interests; she felt passionate about language, literature, and education, especially with regard to teaching Spanish to second generation Mexican immigrants who did not grow up with the language. She wanted flexibility for her future work, and had difficulty selecting programs where she might be happy, thinking it would define her for a lifetime. Some mentors might interpret this as a disappointing lack of focus. But this mentor listened, understood, and responded to the student's deep concern about becoming pigeon-holed. The mentor responded by helping the student to investigate some programs where she would not have to choose

among these passions, but would be encouraged to combine them into something new. Conversations like this allow for witnessing: the mentor listens deeply – to context, to silence, to the student's experiences—and offers suggestions based on what is learned. The mentor's response to the student is changed by what she learns; the mentor is moved and changed, as well.

Transforming Disconnections

Mentors and students are bound to become disconnected from one another from time to time, especially if they work across difference. And when this happens, the ethic of love that I urge mentors to nurture can sustain the work of reconnection, so that they are able to return to a witnessing relationship. Both RCT and writing center theorists place a premium on honesty, or authenticity, in the relationship. This is crucial when the connection is troubled or broken. Disconnection can take various forms: either party might pull back from the other in self-protection; become silent; become defensive or fearful or brace themselves for conflict. In strategies that recall Biesta's and Oliver's caution that we must be vulnerable to the other with whom we are in relationship, Jordan and her co-authors[46] ask us to honestly name the disconnection; to notice our part in it and to look at relational factors that may have contributed to it. When difficulties arise, Jordan would also ask mentors to acknowledge the relational history while maintaining a commitment to continue working toward connection. This she calls paying attention to "what holds the relationship":[47] it is the larger context in which the relationship abides. Welch held the relationship with Margie, not wanting to visit more social violence upon her. In the context of McNair mentoring, the relationship is held by a mutual commitment

[46] Jordan, *Relational Awareness: Transforming Disconnection.*
[47] Ibid., 57.

to equity in the academy. Mentors can explicitly state and share this orientation with students as part of the initial meeting; it cannot be assumed they understand our intent, especially given the potential difficulties of working across difference. When disconnections arise, mentors are still called to respond in a way that does not foreclose opportunities for the student's response. An honest response is not easy, but it can open the way to a new understanding.

Consider a mentor who took offense when a protégé voiced displeasure that her undergraduate major did not require a particular class. Although her relationship with the mentor had been fairly informal and very supportive, the words she chose prompted the mentor to distance herself in anger. In response, the mentor honestly named what she perceived as rudeness in both tone and content. The relationship was strained, but it was held by their mutual commitment to equity in the academy and their relational history. The protégé apologized; as a transfer student, she did completely understand the general education requirements other students completed. The mentor remembered to listen to context, to the institutional forces that have silenced the protégé over the years: she is a first-generation student, worried she is not prepared to compete with the students she will meet in the complex scientific world she is about to join. Having just discovered that some of them might have completed a course she did not have, her anxiety was exacerbated. The mentor's ability to say one true thing[48] in a moment of disconnection reopened the conversation; each could acknowledge her part in that event and work to correct it. When I later discussed this situation with the mentor, I learned that she and protégé developed a stronger personal bond through having faced and worked through

[48] Jean Baker Miller and others, "Therapists' Authenticity," in *The Complexity of Connection*, eds. Judith V. Jordan, Maureen Walker and Linda M. HartlingGuilford Press, 2004).

their disconnecting experience. In this case, it is noteworthy that mentor and protégé hailed from similar social backgrounds and experiences. Even when she has a great deal of commonality with and affinity for a protégé, it can be extremely difficult for a mentor to escape assumptions and training when faced with a disconnecting experience. Honesty is also important when a disconnection is academic in nature. Although they understand that candor can be difficult, Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood find it essential: "anything short of a truthful—but also sensitive—appraisal [of a student's work] is a betrayal of the student's trust."[49] In a spirit similar to my recommendations for mentors, they advise tutors to listen, respond, and be willing to change their practices in accordance with what they learn from the student. When we strive to keep the possibility for response open, the question becomes: what can this student hear right now?

Our ability to be vulnerable and authentic also allows us to let students know we are moved by their experience, certainly not a common occurrence within the bounds of most academic relationships. With a student who anticipates the hardship of moving far from family, an authentic response might let her know I realize I cannot fully comprehend her situation, but I am moved and I want to be supportive of her, to be responsive to her sadness if she can help me to understand what might be the witnessing (loving) response, one that will open possibilities for her. For a student from whom I am estranged, perhaps the authentic response would be to reveal my own vulnerability, to risk entering the relational exchange in which my subjectivity is created through this mutual experience that is painful to me. Is it to her? RCT tells us that the only way to know is to risk saying one true thing that might allow an opening for the student to respond so that the disconnection may be transformed. In these moments of distress,

[49] Murphy and Sherwood, *The Tutoring Process: Exploring Paradigms and Practices*, 10.

Johnson's traditional mentorship does not approach such subtle mutuality. Although he asks us not use passive, distancing strategies, and to be honest with our students, his suggestions for "when things go wrong" remain mired in individualism: do no harm; avoid provoking your protégé through acts of revenge; document mentorships carefully; and examine irrational thinking. Reconnection and mutuality are not at the heart of these indications; mere relational survival is.

Learning to apply RCT and writing center pedagogies to their work, mentors might bring to life the theoretical stance of Biesta and Oliver. With an ethic of love, they can actively move into the space of connection where mentor and protégé meet to be transformed by one another and where mentors are guided by the mystery of the other, rather than by Johnson's "rules of engagement" which may serve only to reproduce problematic hierarchical relations that are likely to result from more traditional mentoring. I have not been content to believe that mentors cannot learn practices that will enhance mentorship across difference, that profound partnerships are the result of spontaneous and serendipitous connections between mentor and protégé. The contributors to RCT take themselves as they are, just as they do for their clients. They understand that, just as with mentors and students:

> The path of connection is filled with disconnections, the vulnerability of seeing reconnection, and the tension around needing to move away, possibly to hide in protective inauthenticity. But [they] believe there is a powerful force behind the movement toward connection, yearning for connection, a desire to contribute to others, to serve something larger than "the self."[50]

Here is a most human way of envisioning a mentoring practice, one that recognizes the mentor's vulnerability and imperfection while supporting her as she moves more deeply

[50] Jordan, Hartling and Walker, *The Complexity of Connection : Writings from the Stone Center's Jean Baker Miller Training Institute*, 6.

into relationships with students. With few exceptions, I have found that mentors do indeed wish to contribute to others, and to serve something larger than themselves. As they develop the habits of mind that can draw them toward witnessing relationships, mentors participate in transformation on many levels: they learn from, and are constituted by, their relationships with students; students bring new ideas, their bodies and experiences to the academy; and the university's exclusionary structures and practices begin to crumble. This is a task that is larger than ourselves. One protégé at a time, it can be accomplished.

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